MALTA MEETING

Seeking oceanic peace

Pacem in Maribus. Peace in the oceans. Some question whether it is possible. Most contend it is essential.

The era of the deep oceans' immunity from the exploitive drive and capability of man is ending. The issues concerning the peaceful uses of the oceans and the ocean floor that nations have been putting off for years now face the world, posing as many questions and unknowns as the black ocean depths.

Within the next decade 35 percent of the world's oil needs will be met by offshore production. By the end of the century food from the oceans may quadruple. Ahead—although there is wide disagreement on when—much or even most of the world's metal supply will be mined from the oceans. Cities may be built over the oceans. Colonies may be erected below.

The coming development of ocean resources, says Elisabeth Mann Borgese of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, raises urgent new demands for a system of order. "The alternative," she declares, "is political and economic chaos, environmental pollution, perhaps even the ultimate pollutant, war itself."

This week, in response to this sense of promise and urgency, several hundred political, economic and scientific leaders from countries throughout the world were gathering on the tiny Mediterranean island of Malta for a week-long international convocation on the peaceful uses of the sea. The goal, through informal, unofficial confrontation of diverse national interests, is to try to clarify the issues and lay some of the groundwork for an eventual new body of international law guiding efforts to use the oceans.

It was the Government of Malta that in 1967 cast attention on the subject with its proposal to the United Nations that the deep ocean floors be regarded as the common heritage of mankind.

Malta's proposal became the focus for early concern by the developing nations and the stimulus for the more recent enunciation of a United States policy (SN: 5/30, p. 526). Through all this Malta has maintained its intense interest in the oceans, and asked the center to organize the convocation. Mrs. Borgese is its director. Its title: *Pacem in Maribus.*

In preparation for the convocation, the center conducted a series of planning conferences earlier this year.

"At one stage," says Great Britain's Lord Ritchie-Calder, chairman of the arms-control session, "our discussions seemed almost like a script conference for a Wild Western scenario. We were opening up the last frontier, the oceans,

CSDI

Mrs. Borgese: Alternative is chaos.

with adventurers going out into the virgin territories staking their claims and repelling interlopers, until the Federal marshal came along to represent law and order." The fears implicit in his summary—he foresees the possibility of private navies maintaining or extending the claims of corporations like maritime feudal barons—typify the sense of urgency behind the conference call. Many see a new international organization, embracing the concept of cooperation and participation, rather than competition and coercion, as the only alternative. □

DDT PRODUCTION

Diminishing sources

The pesticide DDT and the other persistent chlorinated hydrocarbons are coming under concerted attack, and their use is undoubtedly declining in the United States. The Interior Department has banned most of these substances for use on Interior-administered Federal lands (see p. 620). A hearing examiner for a Wisconsin resources commission recently declared DDT to be a pollutant, and a Washington, D.C., Federal court last month ordered the Department of Agriculture to show cause why all registrations for DDT should not be canceled.

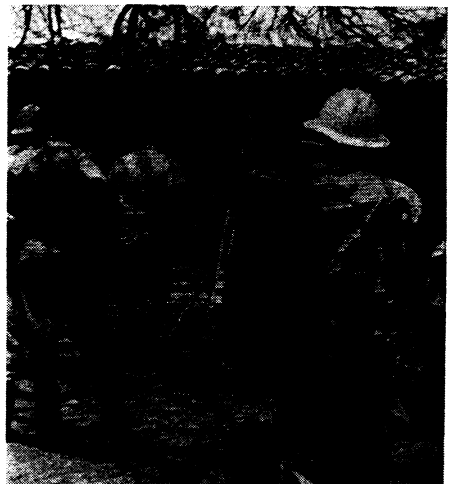
Many of these actions were spurred by lobbying or court action by conservationists and conservation organizations; industry sees the handwriting on the wall. So far three U.S. manufacturers—Olin Corp., Allied Chemical Corp. and Diamond Shamrock Corp.—announced that they would stop making DDT. The three companies accounted for about 50 percent of the United States manufacture.

But as the use of these pesticides has decreased in the United States, exports by U.S. companies, particularly to underdeveloped nations, have increased, the purchases often financed by the Agency for International Development. United States exports of all pesticides between 1966 and 1968, for example, increased from about $101 million to $137 million. About half of the total 1968 U.S. output of 139 million pounds of DDT was exported.

The attitude toward DDT and the other pesticides in the developing nations is far different from that in the United States. The DDT, particularly, is considered vital in disease-eradication and food-growing in these countries. With starvation and pestilence an ever-present threat, the dangers of DDT to wildlife, or even as a possible source of long-term harm to human beings, pale into insignificance. The high cost of other, less persistent, chemicals or biological controls makes the cheap DDT the only option. The DDT, for example, costs around 15 cents a pound; other chemicals run to $1 a pound or more. The United Nations World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization are solidly behind these smaller nations in their desire to continue using DDT. "There is simply nothing else so cheap in anti-malaria campaigns, for example," says Peter Ozorio of the WHO regional office in Washington, D.C.

According to Dr. Lucille Stickel, of the Federal Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, it is impossible to predict to what extent continued use in the underdeveloped countries will continue to cause contamination in countries such as the United States and Sweden, where uses have been curtailed or halted.

But it is possible that the increasing opposition to pesticides in the United States will make the question of local versus worldwide contamination academic. U.S. companies are the major world manufacturers of these substances. Ozorio says that with the curtailment of manufacture of DDT in this country, there is a very real possibility of worldwide shortages. □



WHO

DDT in Mexico: Vital preventive.

Science Service, Inc. is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve, and extend access to *Science News.* www.jstor.org