

On the other hand the Soviet have put forward a plan which differs fundamentally. They have proposed the immediate outlawing of the atomic bomb and the destruction of existing stocks. After this would have been effected the Soviets concede the need for instituting what they call "strict international control" but their proposals in this connection on detailed examination have been shown to be merely a system of periodic visits to such plants only whose existence their respective governments had seen fit to disclose. There was also to be "special" inspection on suspicion but any method of gaining information on which suspicion might be based was carefully excluded.

The Commission's examination of these proposals showed that they would represent only an act of unilateral disarmament by the United States which, even if it were carried out, would give no assurance that any country engaged in atomic activities would not or could not secretly make and use the bomb in future.

This conclusion follows from the fact, to which I have already referred, that the fissionable materials which are the essential substances for such peaceful applications of atomic energy as the development in the future of atomic power, are also the explosive element of the bomb. In the absence of effective inspection and control these substances could readily be diverted clandestinely from peaceful to military use by a nation secretly preparing atomic war.

The majority members were therefore forced to the conclusion, despite every wish to find a basis of agreement, that they must reject the Soviet proposals as "completely ignoring the existing technical knowledge of the problem or providing an adequate basis for effective international control and the elimination of atomic weapons from national armaments."

Such was the situation in the Atomic Energy Commission in the spring of 1948. The Soviet were adamant against the acceptance of the elements of control which the majority were convinced were necessary and having regard to the far reaching and terrifying consequences of any doubt on these matters, the majority could accept nothing less.

As a result it became evident that the issue should be raised for clarification in the broader forum presented by the Third Session of the General Assembly then due to meet in Paris in September.

In proposing that the Security Council should be invited to accept this course, the majority members of the Commission after reaffirming the correctness of their proposals, pointed out that having concluded that part of their task concerned primarily with scientific and technological matters, they realized that the time had arrived when increased efforts should be made with regard to general considerations, including those of an international political character, the debate on which could be pressed with greater advantage in the General Assembly of the United Nations itself.

The attempt to solve the atomic energy "impasse" in the Security Council met on 22 June 1948 with the 26th veto exercised by the Soviet Union. However, a procedural motion proposed by Canada to refer the three reports of the Commission to the General Assembly "as a matter of special concern" was passed by a majority of 9-2.

There was thus created opportunity to test the conclusions of the majority both as regards their technical correctness and also, and most importantly, as to their acceptability to the nations members of the General Assembly.

I come now to the further development of these matters which took place in Paris during September, October and November last.