

DISARMAMENT

Among the topics which were discussed at the United Nations this year was the question of disarmament, which was perhaps the major topic. I and members of the Canadian Delegation at the United Nations had some reason to be not entirely satisfied about the consideration in the twelfth session of the United Nations of that topic which means so much to mankind. The 24 powers did put forward a resolution that was drafted by the Subcommittee on Disarmament on August 29, 1957, and that resolution did receive endorsement by the General Assembly. In fact the U.S.S.R. was not able to line up any votes in opposition to that resolution except those of its own satellites. It is true that there were some who abstained from voting on that 24-power resolution, but I judged that in many cases the abstention was due not to any opposition to the resolution but because they really thought any resolution put forward and adopted by the United Nations would be ineffective, as the U.S.S.R. said it would not co-operate in further negotiations under that resolution....

After we had obtained for that resolution approval from the General Assembly which was unanimous but with abstentions, the U.S.S.R. said it would not participate in the discussions of the Disarmament Commission or of the Subcommittee. We were greatly disappointed to hear that, because in getting that resolution so admirably supported in the United Nations we felt we had a vote ... that would carry some weight with the U.S.S.R. because it reflected a world-wide opinion that they should consider the rejection of the Western proposals.

We tried to make it clear to the United Nations that the resolution that was so widely supported in the General Assembly was not necessarily in our opinion the only means whereby disarmament could be promoted. On October 23, 1957, I spoke in the Political Committee and asked our Russian friends to look at the resolution; not to regard it as coming from us in a take it or leave it manner, but to accept it on our assurance that it would be a basis for further negotiations. ... After the U.S.S.R. stated definitely that it would not negotiate any further, the Soviet Delegation did put forward the suggestion that the Disarmament Commission should be made up of the 82 member nations of the United Nations, and indeed that the complexion of the General Assembly itself should be reflected in the new Disarmament Commission.

We all felt that this was a manifestly impractical proposition, and we were bound to conclude that it was merely a propaganda move. It would be entirely unwieldy for 82 nations to sit down and discuss the problem in one meeting or series of meetings on disarmament. That was, however, put to the General Assembly by the U.S.S.R. and it was rejected by the General Assembly.