

II POLITICAL AND SECURITY

Disarmament

When the General Assembly reconvened for its ninth session in the autumn of 1954, it had before it a report of the Disarmament Commission which simply transmitted without comment the record of the first round of discussion of its sub-committee which had taken place in London from May 13 to June 22, 1954. Canada is a member of the sub-committee together with France, the United Kingdom, the United States and the U.S.S.R. Although little, if any, progress had been achieved by the sub-committee, the Western Powers considered that the London talks had not resulted in a final breakdown in disarmament negotiations and that the resumption of the sub-committee's work provided the most appropriate means in the circumstances for the continuation of these negotiations. A Canadian resolution along these lines, introduced at the ninth session, was readily approved by the other Western members of the sub-committee and a revised version of the resolution which did not involve any change of substance was ultimately sponsored by all members of the sub-committee, including the Soviet Union. This was the first time since 1946 that the Soviet Union joined the Western Powers in sponsoring a disarmament resolution. In the end, the five-power resolution was adopted unanimously by the General Assembly on November 4. The Canadian Delegation played an active role in the delicate negotiations which led to this satisfactory result. In addition to recommending that the sub-committee be reconvened, the Assembly resolution provided for the reference to the Disarmament Commission of suggestions put forward at the ninth session by Australia, India and the Philippines.

During the Assembly debate, the Soviet Representative, the late Mr. Vyshinsky, submitted proposals which undoubtedly represented an advance towards the Western position. The immediate unconditional banning of the use of nuclear weapons was no longer maintained as a pre-condition for successful negotiations. The arbitrary proposal of a one-third reduction of armed forces which was clearly unacceptable to the Western powers, and which had become a traditional feature of the Soviet disarmament programme, was also abandoned. Mr. Vyshinsky's plan, moreover, implied tacit acceptance of two phases for the execution of the Soviet programme, thus pointing to the end of the fruitless debate on "stages". The Soviet Government at the same time declared its readiness to accept "as a basis" for further discussions the Anglo-French proposals of June 11, 1954, which it had summarily rejected at the time of their presentation in the sub-committee. There remained, however, wide gaps between the positions of both sides, particularly on the question of adequate inspection and control without which no disarmament programme could be effective.

When the second round of substantive discussions by the sub-committee began in London on February 25, 1955, the Soviet Government tabled proposals which represented a complete reversal of the position which it had taken at the ninth session. These proposals ignored the Anglo-French plan accepted earlier by Mr. Vyshinsky as a basis of negotiations, and revived old propaganda positions such as the immediate destruction of all stocks of nuclear