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POLITICAL AND SECURITY

Disarmament

Although the Disarmament Commission of the General Assembly, comprising all members of the United Nations, met only once during 1959, a series of important developments had by year's end brought disarmament once again to the forefront of international attention both within and outside the United Nations. The impetus for this upsurge of interest came from the Geneva talks of the Foreign Ministers of France, the United Kingdom, the United States and the U.S.S.R. On August 5, 1959 they announced the intention of their governments to set up a new ten-member committee. Such a committee was envisaged as a "useful means of exploring through mutual consultations every avenue of possible progress towards such agreements and recommendations on the limitation and reduction of all types of armaments and armed forces under effective international control as may, in the first instance, be of particular relevance to the countries participating in these deliberations". Subsequently, Canada agreed to participate with Italy, France, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, the U.S.S.R., Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Romania.

The conference on measures to reduce the danger from surprise attack, attended by Canada, had adjourned in December 1958 and did not resume its sessions during 1959. On the other hand, the political negotiations seeking to draft a treaty and to establish a control system, for the discontinuance of nuclear tests which had begun between Representatives of the U.S.A., the United Kingdom and the U.S.S.R. in Geneva in October 1958, had resumed in January and were continued with periodic recesses throughout 1959. Considerable progress was being made in these negotiations. However, despite agreement on some 20 articles by year's end, a number of important difficulties had still to be resolved. The central problem concerned formulation of a method of making decisions for inspection of national territories when events, detected by instruments at control posts, could be suspected of being nuclear explosions.

In setting up the ten-nation Committee with broad terms of reference, the great powers of course took into account the special responsibility which rests on them to find a basis for agreement. Nevertheless they were fully aware that the Charter recognizes disarmament matters to be of world-wide concern and that ultimate responsibility for general disarmament measures lies with the United Nations. Accordingly it was their intention to keep the Disarmament Commission of the General Assembly appropriately informed of progress in the deliberations of the ten-nation Committee. At their request, the Secretary-General convened the Commission on September 10 to consider a four-power communiqué. In one sitting the Commission approved a resolution welcoming the resumption of consultations on disarmament and expressing the hope, as the four powers had done, that the results achieved in the deliberations of the ten-nation Committee "will provide a useful basis for the consideration of disarmament in the United Nations".

Against this background the question of disarmament assumed special importance at the fourteenth session of the General Assembly. There was