

Nevertheless the Canadian Government are prepared to show their faith in the United Nations by approaching these proposals of the USSR for an examination of their merits as though they had been put forward in less equivocal circumstances.

Some of the proposals are quite familiar. Indeed the general framework appears to us to be the same as recent Soviet plans. The main new element is an apparent readiness to accept the principle of aerial inspection. If this acceptance proves to be real it will represent an advance which we could regard with satisfaction. It would be the one spark of hopefulness to come from Moscow in these gloomy weeks of crisis. But although the value of aerial inspection appears to be gaining acceptance among the Soviet leaders they seemingly have yet to grasp its principal merit. It would be an advantage if the secret manoeuvres of the Red Army could no longer be executed threateningly right on the borders of the Western world. But the greatest danger to mankind lies in the massive surprise assault with all the modern apparatus of mass destruction. The Soviet proposals still would afford no means of gaining assurance that forces of destruction were not being prepared in the vast regions of the Soviet Union.

Having said this, I would repeat that we are prepared to join in the examination of the new Soviet proposals. It has always been our view that the United Nations offers the proper framework for achieving disarmament. But we have never thought that the substance of the problem could be brought nearer solution by increasing the number of the negotiators. We therefore look with scepticism on the Soviet suggestion for a conference based upon the participation of the NATO and Warsaw Pact powers. And while we in Canada would welcome any advance which might be initiated by exchanges between the great powers, we are doubtful that in the present tense situation any helpful results could be hoped for. It is no use pretending that confidence has not been severely shaken and that an improved political context has not become necessary.

Insofar as we may draw conclusions for the general terms in which the Soviet proposals are presented, we fear that these proposals, like too many of their predecessors, may be aimed simply at the weakening of the non-communist world, particularly by the disruption of NATO, and at continuing the division of Germany and of all Europe. We shall continue to hope, however, that there is some more constructive approach to the problem of Germany and of Europe involved. On the crucial question of control the proposals give no sign of readiness to clarify the Soviet attitude, which has never come from behind its veil of obscurity. Nor do they reflect the difficulties, which the Russians acknowledge to exist, of detecting concealed stockpiles of nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, we will study these Soviet proposals with great care. We will never refuse any opportunity to seek after even the germ of an agreement on disarmament.

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