

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES



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Canada at the Geneva Disarmament Table

Statement to the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee in Geneva on March 26, 1964, by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Paul Martin.

Mr. Chairman, I should first of all like to express to you my gratitude for the very generous words which you used in extending a welcome to me at this table this morning, and I am particularly grateful that you called my attention to the contribution which General Burns and his colleagues representing Canada on this Committee have been able to make to your deliberations. I also thank Mr. Thomas — as one who apparently attends these deliberations much more often than I, unfortunately, have a chance of doing — for joining in extending a welcome to me. I should like to say to my colleague the Foreign Minister of Brazil that I am very much honoured that he should be here this morning. I read his statement of Tuesday with great interest. I regard it as a positive contribution to our deliberations, and I must say that I am happy to see him here this morning, because Brazil and Canada have shared some common experiences, and notable among these is our collaboration in the peace-keeping operations of the United Nations in the United Nations Emergency Force.

There is a great temptation for me this morning — and I am not going to escape it — to be a little nostalgic. Mr. Butler said, either in open committee or to someone when he was here in January, that the last time he was in this room was in 1939. The last time I was in this room, until this morning, was in 1938. When one thinks of all that has happened since that date — a great war, all the discussions that led to the establishment of the United Nations and all the discussions that we have had in the field of disarmament, which happily are at any rate continuing —, one can appreciate the importance and the significance of our work in this Committee.

My own associations with disarmament discussions go back to 1953 when, on behalf of three members of the Five-Power Sub-Committee, I carried on some talks with Mr. Vishinsky that led to a reactivation of the Sub-Committee of the Disarmament Commission. While the agreement that we were able to effect was simply on a procedural point, the extent of the deterioration of East-West relations at that time perhaps is symbolized by the recognition that a mere agreement on a procedural point represented a major triumph. So, when we come to estimate and calculate the work of this Committee, we may possibly look upon what has happened, and what has been achieved since that time, and place it alongside the comparatively unimportant achievement of merely resuming discussions, as was done following the talks between Mr. Vishinsky and myself as the spokesman for three other members of the Sub-Committee at that time.