Fifteenth Session CHAPTER IV - 1

ANNEX XVII - (iii)

No.7.

60/34 DISARMAMENT AND THE NON-NUCLEAR POWERS

A statement by the Secretary of State
for External Affairs, Mr. Howard Green,
in the First Committee of the United
Nations on October 19

I have no wish in my statement today to re-open the arguments of the past. It seems to me that, for the time being, we must leave aside debates about which side has the better set of principles--important as they are, and I admit this importance--or which has the better plan for disarmament. The situation facing us is so serious that we must concentrate on the task of getting negotiations restarted. This is the prime responsibility of the First Committee at the present time.

Moreover, in approaching the problem of disarmament at this session, I suggest that we take our main guidance from the 28-power resolution adopted unanimously on October 17. Among other things, it urged that "immediate and constructive steps should be adopted in regard to the urgent problems" facing us. This extract was quoted this morning by the representative of the U.S.S.R., --but, even so, I think it worthwhile repeating.

Concerted Action Urgent

The need for serious discussion and action on our part is greater than ever. Almost without exception, the statements made during the course of this fifteenth session of the United Nations General Assembly have underlined the urgency and the importance of concerted action to restart the disarmament negotiations and to facilitate progress in them. We have been reminded that on a solution to the disarmament problem may well rest the question of whether or not there will be a new world war, and I believe that no one in this room today doubts that this potential danger exists.

But many of those who wish to see disarmament achieved, because they realize the awful consequences of not doing so, have not yet come to the equally important realization that successful negotiations will involve genuine compromise and balanced concessions from both sides, even though these may appear, in a short-term view, to involve some sacrifices.

It is this fact which must be realized and acted upon, before we can return, as return we must, to serious negotiations. Without this resolve, taken fully and consciously by all of us, no speech-making, no resolution, no change of negotiating bodies and no juggling of plans will have the slightest effect on the likelihood of real progress.

Negotiation Before Agreement

In his statement this morning, the representative of the U.S.S.R. took the position that, before negotiations begin, it is necessary to reach agreement. That is the real meaning of his assertion that unless the UN General Assembly agrees on the basic principles of general and complete disarmament the cause of disarmament will not be benefited by the resumption of negotiations. In our view, the purpose of the negotiations is, in the first place, to find a basis for agreement and then go on to develop that agreement. That is why it is so essential to focus attention on the central problem of restarting negotiations, whether or not agreement is reached here on basic principles.

I have often expressed my conviction that the way to disarmament lies through serious negotiation--that is, hard bargaining about concrete measures, pursued in good faith, with patience and determination until an agreement is reached. The most recent attempt to negotiate disarmament agreements was made, of course, in the Ten-Nation Committee. In renewed disarmament negotiations, surely it would be wiser to capitalize on and consolidate such progress as was made in the Ten-Nation Committee than to start from the beginning all over again. For its part, Canada is ready now, today, to resume the work which the Ten-Nation Committee began in Geneva, because, as the representatives know, we happen to be a member of that Committee.

It can hardly be said seriously that the Ten-Nation Committee is not suited for hard bargaining. It embodies essentially a "two-sides" conception; it brings face to face the powers possessing the most powerful weapons and having the most experience in disarmament negotiations. Whatever the shortcomings of the negotiations, and I admit that there were shortcomings, they cannot be blamed on the negotiating forum.

Packaging the Problem

Unfortunately, in the Ten-Nation Committee the two sides have tended to talk at cross-purposes. In an effort to avoid this, the Canadian representative in the Ten-Nation Committee made several suggestions for concentrating the discussion on substantive measures. One was that proposals of comparable significance from the plans of each side should be discussed in packages. That is, a proposal by the Soviet side should be considered in conjunction with the proposals from the Western side and an attempt made to reach agreement on

those two proposals--one from each side. And we described this as discussing the problem in packages. This was not a proposal that we seek only partial disarmament, as some have argued, but rather what we believe is a practical approach to the negotiations--a practical way to start getting results.

A desire to ensure a business-like approach in the Committee was also the basis for my suggestion in the Disarmament Commission, which sat in this room two months ago, that the negotiating committee might benefit from having a neutral chairman. I have in mind a chairman known for his record of impartiality and for his experience in dealing with difficult discussions. The basis of selection would be personal qualities rather than nationality. He might be a national of one of the middle or smaller powers which have not been connected with current negotiations; for instance, I give as an example the chairman of the Disarmament Commission, or it might be a citizen of a country which does not belong to the UN, such as Switzerland.

Task of Chairman

The neutral chairman would attend impartially to the procedures of the Committee and see that it had a regular order of business at each meeting. With such a chairman and procedure, the Committee would be spared, I am sure, the talking at cross-purposes. In short, this neutral chairman could assist in conducting a discussion on the complex maze of problems which compose the disarmament question.

For if we have learned anything at all during the protracted international discussion of disarmament, it is that the subject is complicated, and grows more so with each passing week, month and year of weapons development. We need only remember the statements which have already been made in this discussion today to realize that fact. If we are ever to cope with the growing problem, we must make a start on actual measures, without detracting from the more comprehensive plans related to ultimate goals.

The very complexity of the issues indicates one way to make progress, and that is, through technical studies. It is already common ground that many measures of disarmament and their verification will require joint technical studies before there can be agreement on and implementation of actual measures. And in this connection, I was somewhat surprised to hear the representative of the U.S.S.R. arguing so strongly this morning against technical studies. In a minute or two I hope to be able to show that his own side have expressed great interest and have actually carried out joint technical studies in the three-power committee at Geneva.

Draft Resolution on Technical Studies

It seems to my Government that a useful list of possibilities--which does not necessarily have to be treated as exhaustive--is to be found in the draft resolution on technical studies submitted by the United Kingdom in Document A/C1/L251. This draft resolution, as I understand it, seeks to give expression to the important suggestion made by Prime Minister Macmillan in the general debate that many aspects of the disarmament question might usefully be approached from the scientific point of view. The Canadian Government favours this approach and believes it capable of extension, even beyond the limits which the United Kingdom may have envisaged for it.

We see this as a procedure to expedite negotiations --not to delay them as some would suggest. The powers concerned should be willing to begin joint technical studies concerning the measures, at the earliest possible date, irrespective of any interruption in the political negotiations on disarmament. If it is agreed that studies are required in order to facilitate negotiations, why not undertake those studies at once?

The studies would be conducted by experts, especially by nationals of the powers directly concerned in the negotiations because of their technical knowledge and direct involvement in the problems. But, and I repeat that, but qualified experts from other countries--whose contribution would be based on technical competence rather than on political viewpoint--could also participate in the studies, and, we believe, could make an extremely valuable contribution.

I agree with the Foreign Minister of Sweden, who said, the other day, in his remarks in the UN General Assembly, that there would be a need for more than one technical study-group. Whatever conclusions those experts might reach need not affect the political bargaining between the two sides in the negotiations, but the negotiating nations would benefit from having a qualified presentation and assessment of the technical problems involved.

The negotiations concerning the discontinuance of nuclear weapons tests serve as a model in this respect. In the Canadian view, these negotiations have shown more promise of serious intent than any others relating to disarmament.

Expert Deliberation

By agreement between the U.S.S.R., U.S.A. and U.K.--and here I point out that what happened is not in line with what the representative of the U.S.S.R. was advocating this morning--those negotiations began with a preliminary scientific study concerning the feasibility of controlling violations of any international agreement to discontinue tests. This joint technical study, which took place in the summer of 1958,

before the political negotiations had even begun, involved a group of experts from eight countries--not only from the three, but from eight countries--who eventually produced a set of agreed conclusions which greatly facilitated the work of the subsequent three-power conference.

From time to time, moreover, the three powers have had occasion to refer other problems to their technical experts, acting jointly, for scientific study. What I am suggesting is that the same sort of process could and should be applied to the technical problems involved in various disarmament measures.

As regards nuclear tests, I should like to place on record at this point the satisfaction of the Canadian Delegation that the three-power conference has continued in being and that the work on a draft treaty has progressed as far as it has. The Canadian Government has taken a clear position against further nuclear testing.

No Renewal of Tests

For this reason, we are gratified that the three nuclear powers unilaterally discontinued their tests during the negotiations. As we all know, no such tests are going on at the present time, and there has been none for nearly two years. We hope that this discontinuance will be enshrined in the treaty now being negotiated and that many other powers will accede to it once it has been concluded.

This much-needed example of international co-operation in an area in which all nations have a vital interest would constitute a valuable precedent for the establishment of verification procedures in the field of nuclear disarmament. We assume that the concern of the UN General Assembly about nuclear testing--and that will come up, of course, in the consideration of the Indian item on the agenda--will be expressed in such a way as to sustain the sense of urgency in reaching agreement on the remaining problems in the three-power negotiations.

Responsiblity of Non-Nuclear Powers

It will be obvious from what I have said so far that the Canadian Delegation is determined to concentrate its efforts at this session on ideas and suggestions designed to restart the machinery of negotiation at the earliest possible opportunity and to facilitate progress in negotiations. We believe that the non-nuclear powers have a direct responsiblity for urging that the search for agreement be pursued with the utmost vigour. We believe that the non-nuclear powers represented around this table must put the pressure on the nuclear powers to see that the search for agreement is not dropped but is continued with the utmost urgency, because the fate of the whole of humanity is at stake in this question. We are not here simply debating a theoretical point; we are debating the future of civilization--possibly whether there will be any future civilization or not--

and I repeat that the non-nuclear powers have a direct responsibility for urging that the search for an agreement be pursued with the utmost vigour, that the procedural questions and the red tape and all the smoke-screens be done away with, and that action be got on with in regard to these negotiations.

Role of General Assembly

I have no doubt that this Assembly can have and must have an important effect on the current impasse on disarmament questions. It is imperative that the Assembly should follow up vigorously the Disarmament Commission's call in August for the earliest possible continuation of negotiations. My Government drew great satisfaction from the unanimous adoption of that resolution by the Disarmament Commission. I should like to quote to the representatives present here the important paragraph of that resolution:

> "The Disarmament Commission,
>
> "Considers it necessary and recommends that, in view of the urgency of the problem, continued efforts be made for the earliest possible continuation of international negotiations to achieve a constructive solution of the question of general and complete disarmament under effective international control." (DC/182).

That was not a resolution passed simply by a majority vote; it was passed unanimously by the Disarmament Commission, which, as we all know, has on it representatives of every member state of the UN.

Only by mobilizing the world demand for action on disarmament--and all of us here know that there is such a world demand, the people of the world are demanding that action be taken--can we hope to develop the kind of pressure needed to induce the nuclear powers to do something about the dangerous development and spread of armed strength--in short, to negotiate seriously about disarmament.

We can do more than merely call for resumed negotiations. We can adopt proposals designed to improve the machinery of negotiation. I have already suggested that a neutral chairman be appointed to assist the two sides. There is, as well, the commendable U.K. proposal for a technical study-group.

An Advisory Committee

My further suggestion is that the Disarmament Commission should be asked to establish an advisory committee--perhaps a group of ten or twelve members representing the main geographical areas. I should regard it as a kind of watchdog committee, offering advice and encouragement to the negotiators. The

advisory committee could report direct to them--but the Disarmament Commission of the UN would be kept informed and consulted. For its own purposes, this advisory group could receive reports and suggestions from the negotiating body, from the technical study-group or from other members of the Disarmament Commission.

We are often properly reminded that the interests of every country in the world are at stake in disarmament. But, obviously, in making progress toward the goal of disarmament, different countries have different roles to play. The contribution which can be made by the great powers is naturally different from that which can be made by the middle and small powers of the world. There is a good deal to be said for recognizing this fact in the machinery which we set up for examining the question of disarmament.

Role of Smaller Members

It would be a practical impossiblity to have technical studies on disarmament measures which did not involve experts from the great powers. However, there is another important area of disarmament in which the middle and smaller powers have a special role and, I believe, a vital role. This is in the broad field of principles, proposals and new ideas. In our view, a representative group of UN members, as I have suggested, could make very helpful suggestions to the main negotiating group.

Let me illustrate this by giving some examples of what such an advisory committee, such a watch-dog committee, could do.

First, they could consider the various sets of principles which have been advanced with a view to finding a common definition. It is perfectly obvious, from what we have heard today, that this First Committee could very easily get into a debate on general principles, and would then probably reach only disagreement at the end of that debate. I suggest that here is a field for this advisory committee--consideration of the various sets of principles which have been advanced.

Secondly--and I am simply putting these suggestions before the representatives for their consideration, there are probably many others that will be made--they could look at specific proposals, like the important Irish proposal for the prevention of the dissemination of nuclear weapons. The non-nuclear powers, and indeed the people of the world at large, are vitally concerned in this proposal.

Thirdly, they could consider how best to deal with weapons of mass destruction--nuclear, bacteriological and chemical--and their means of delivery.

Fourthly, they could examine the problems of peace-keeping machinery in relation to the programme of disarmament.

Fifthly, they could explore the relationship between this machinery and the disarmament control organization, and the relationship of both to the UN.

And sixthly, they could discuss new ideas--and certainly it would not do any harm to have some new ideas handed to the negotiating committee--new ideas which would be based on their own views about the importance and urgency of various measures of disarmament.

This non-technical advisory committee on disarmament would be available to the negotiators and, as I have said, could make reports to them. The advisory committee's studies and reports would not conflict with those of the proposed technical group, which would be concerned with administrative, scientific and military details.

Disadvantages of Great-Power Negotiation

My main suggestion is that the great military powers have one role to play in disarmament and the middle and smaller powers another which is no less vital and important. The Ten-Nation Committee provides a workable forum for negotiation between the rival great-power groups; and new negotiating body should preserve that "two-sides" conception. However, this two-sided approach to disarmament has been made at the expense of the representation of middle and smaller powers and at the expense of close ties with the UN. As a middle power, Canada is a strong believer in the importance of maintaining the Charter responsibility of the UN in all areas of peace and security.

It is the view of the Canadian Government that, in making preparations for restarting and facilitating disarmament negotiations, we should strive to strengthen the influence of the middle and smaller powers--and ultimately the UN--on these negotiations. This is the sense of the various suggestions I have put forward in my statement this afternoon. I commend them to the members of the Committee for consideration, and I should be delighted to have other suggestions coming from other middle and smaller powers. The challenge facing us today is very clear. The challenge is to bring about a resumption of negotiations, and we must spare no effort to achieve that result.

S/C