



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
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THE CANADIAN REPLY TO SOVIET PROPOSALS FOR DISARMAMENT.

A speech by Hon. Lionel Chevrier, Acting Leader of the Canadian Delegation, given in the First Committee of the Third Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, in Paris, on October 11, 1948.

The course of this debate has made it clear how earnestly the nations desire real and effective disarmament. Disarmament is a universal objective. I submit that there is no peaceful State, however great or small it may be, that is not willing to disarm to the fullest extent consistent with its security. Certainly the people of Canada are wholeheartedly in favour of any effective plan which would make it possible for them and for other peaceful peoples to reduce the amounts that they must now spend on armaments and armed forces as a measure of security. The same is true in every country that is peacefully inclined and has no aggressive intentions. I repeat that disarmament is a universal objective. It is impossible to emphasize that fact too frequently.

Unfortunately, the Soviet delegation is doing everything in its power to create the impression that the Soviet Union and those States that follow the Soviet line with such remarkable fidelity are the only champions of disarmament. How often have we heard it said that only the U.S.S.R. and those associated with them are upholders of peace and believers in disarmament. Nothing could be further from the truth. I am sure it is unnecessary for me to state that Canada is a wholehearted and sincere believer in peace and is completely without aggressive designs on anyone. In the whole of its history, since self-government was secured in Canada a century ago, not one square foot of territory has been acquired in my country through war or as a result of war. Other delegations have spoken convincingly of their desire for peace and I have no doubt that still others will follow. The point was well put by the delegate of the United Kingdom the other day when he asked us to imagine Luxembourg as a menace to the safety of the Soviet Union. It cannot be stated too often or remembered too vividly that the Soviet Union, through every means at its disposal, is deliberately twisting facts in an effort to make the unthinking believe that only the Soviet Union favour peace and disarmament, while the rest of the world is in favour of war. As I said before, nothing could be further from the truth.

If we are to make progress in disarmament, as we all so earnestly desire, we can only do so upon a basis of confidence and goodwill. Does anyone think that mutual understanding, goodwill and co-operation are universal in the world today? To pose the question is to give the answer. But it is not enough to leave the matter there. Why has there been such a breakdown in international confidence and goodwill?

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What must be remembered by every thinking citizen of this troubled planet is that the tension existing today has been created by the Soviet Union which continues to add fuel to the flame. Not only has the Soviet Union created tension through its policies in international affairs, about which I shall have a word to say later on, but it has added to it by the efforts which it is making to create confusion and dissension within the borders of every liberty-loving and democratic State. If the leaders of the Soviet Union are sincere in their desire for a peaceful and happy world, we have a right to look to them for a moderation of the tension which they have been and are creating. It is because we see no signs of such moderation that we are in doubt as to Soviet motives in presenting the resolution which is now before us.

Let us turn now to an examination of the Soviet Resolution on Disarmament. We shall have to make our own examination of this resolution because Mr. Vishinsky in a long statement on Thursday last made practically no reference to the resolution itself. We heard a great deal about Mr. Spaak, we heard a great deal about Mr. Bevin, we even heard some historical records about the Disarmament Conference 20 years ago but nothing about the resolution.

How would the resolution, if adopted, add to our security? Why should we regard it as offering a solution to the complex and difficult problem of disarmament?

Questions like these which are normally answered by the sponsor of a resolution were left untouched. Now let me turn again to the resolution. On the question of reducing by one-third the force of the permanent members of the Security Council we have already heard cogent reasons from some of its permanent members as to the utter unsuitability of a mere proportional cut in armaments. There must clearly be qualitative as well as quantitative disarmament. In order to realize the emptiness of the Soviet suggestion that unless we approve their particular resolution we are opposed to disarmament, it is only necessary to turn to the resolution itself and to see what teeth it contains. By teeth I mean what measures of enforcement it provides. No agreement to disarm can be effective unless it provides a clear and workable system for bringing about disarmament and making sure beyond any doubt that the parties to the agreement are living up to their obligations. It is certainly regrettable that Soviet policies have brought the world to a point where we cannot be expected, in view of the secrecy which shrouds the Soviet Union, to accept vague assurances that this or any other measure of disarmament would actually be put into effect inside the borders of that State. That is why we are forced to the conclusion that, at all times, we must concentrate our attention upon measures of enforcement, inspection, verification and control. Canada, like most of the countries that fought together in the recent war, substantially reduced its own armaments and armed forces upon the conclusion of hostilities. We did this in the hope that we might be able to place reliance for our own security on the undertakings to which all members of the United Nations had pledged themselves under the Charter. We also hoped that we could rely on the machinery for the maintenance of international peace provided by the Charter.

No country, therefore, would welcome more sincerely than Canada any progress that can be made towards effective measures of general disarmament. Let there be no mistake about that. Canada warmly welcomes effective measures of general disarmament and that has been our consistent opinion. But we will not support measures of disarmament at the cost of insecurity for ourselves or at the cost of insecurity for other nations bent upon maintaining international peace and security on the basis of the

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principles and purposes of the Charter. As has already been said, why should we be asked to pool our security with a nation which will not, and is determined not to, reveal to the world what it is doing? I suggest with deference that if the factors contributing to the present state of tension and insecurity were objectively examined, it would be found that the principal aggravating causes are:

1. The tremendous size of the armed forces maintained and deployed by the Soviet Union, particularly in Europe;

2. The failure of the Soviet Union to co-operate in the establishment of collective forces under the United Nations on the basis of Article 43 of the Charter;

3. The failure of the Soviet Union to co-operate in the development of proposals to establish international control of atomic energy, and

4. The failure of the Soviet Union to respond to the majority view expressed in the Commission on conventional armaments that measures must be taken to strengthen the sense of security of nations before national armaments may be regulated or reduced. A glance at the Soviet resolution reveals how essentially meaningless it is. The resolution seeks to persuade us that it favours disarmament, but what does it propose in the way of enforcement? I quote the final paragraph of the Soviet draft resolution:

"The General Assembly recommends to establish within the framework of the Security Council an international control body for the purpose of supervision of, and control over, the implementation of the measures for the reduction of armaments and armed forces and for the prohibition of atomic weapons." In appearance, this may sound reassuring, but in fact what does it mean? It means that an international body -- whose activities are not even outlined -- is to be established "within the framework of the Security Council." That can only mean that the veto is to apply at some stage and can be used to prevent the inspection and enforcement that is so essential to a disarmament agreement. As has already been asked in this debate, what opportunity is there for inspection, for verification and for control. The Soviet proposals about international control over the implementation of measures of disarmament are, to say the least, ambiguous. In the view of the Canadian delegation, a system of international inspection is essential to any disarmament agreement. It is one thing for the Soviet Union to say that they will reduce by one-third their present land, naval and air forces, and even to say after a year has passed that the one-third reduction has been carried out, but it is quite another thing for the Soviet Union to tell us that they will welcome international observers before, during and after the reduction. There, I submit with deference, lies the weakness of the proposal. In the first case, the world has to accept the unsupported assurances of the Soviet Government. In the second case, the world can satisfy itself as to the manner in which disarmament is being carried out. This international inspection would, of course, apply to every country and there would be no invidious singling out of any one country for inspection. A constant scrutiny would be kept on the progress of disarmament measures.

In the view of our delegation, there is nothing more important in this whole problem of international disarmament than the question of inspection, verification and control. The Soviet delegate has already been asked to declare unequivocally whether his country is prepared to open its doors and its borders to international observer teams. Such observer teams might establish both quantitatively and qualitatively the armed forces and armaments, both existing and potential, at the disposal of the Soviet Union in its own territories and the territories under its control, as

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well as in the territories of all other principal States. It strikes our delegation that an inspection of this nature is clearly a necessary prerequisite if a sound basis for progressive general disarmament is to be established. Following such an inspection a formula of disarmament must be found which would be related to the needs of international peace and security. The Canadian delegation will await with interest the Soviet delegate's reply to this question, already put and now repeated.

Mr. Chairman, I have made it clear why this delegation considers that the Soviet resolution, in spite of its appearance of simplicity, would actually set us back in the complicated task of securing disarmament. A decision has already been taken to disarm, in the General Assembly resolution of 1946, and adequate machinery has been established to carry out that purpose. All that is needed now is the willingness on the part of all nations to accept the principles and procedures for disarmament which are acceptable to the majority. We have before us this morning a resolution that has been circulated by the United Kingdom delegation. It makes the circumstances clear by referring to the Military Staff Committee and the Commission on Conventional Armaments and the Atomic Energy Commission Bodies which are already charged with the technical tasks of disarmament. It makes clear also that a majority of nations in those Bodies are willing to disarm on the basis of principles which will not endanger the lives and homes of their people. This resolution if adopted by the Assembly will demonstrate to the world that disarmament is possible, without threat or danger to any State, whether in the majority or minority in this debate, if the lines of approach, already laid down, are followed. The principles of this resolution are ones to which the Canadian delegation fully adheres, and we are prepared to continue our participation in efforts to put them into practice. The Canadian delegation hopes that the Committee will put before the Assembly a resolution in terms of the United Kingdom proposal.