

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 53/49 MEASURES TO REDUCE INTERNATIONAL TENSION

Text of a statement made on November 23, 1953, by the Vice-Chairman of the Canadian Delegation, Mr. Alcide Côté, in the First Committee of the eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly, on agenda item 73 - Measures to Reduce the Threat of a New World War and to Reduce Tension in International Relations.

NOTE: This item was submitted to the eighth session of the General Assembly by the Soviet Delegation and was based on a draft resolution drawn up by the U.S.S.R. The text of this draft resolution is given at the end of the Canadian statement.

My intervention will be brief. In ranging over a wide field last Thursday, Mr. Vyshinsky sought to establish the claim that the Soviet Union was doing all it could to reduce international tension. If international tension has not in fact been reduced, the fault, according to the Soviet representative, lay with the Western powers. This is, of course, familiar Soviet propaganda which we have learned to expect and which I doubt is taken seriously even in the countries of the Soviet bloc. What, in fact, has been our experience in this committee in the course of this double debate which we have had on disarmament and the reduction of international tensions?

Despite an obvious readiness and eagerness on the part of almost every representative in this committee to obtain a unanimously agreed formulation of the Disarmament Commission's very difficult task, the delegations of the Soviet bloc felt unable to join the 54 other delegations who supported the resolution we adopted last week. This in itself, although a depressing fact, would not have been so discouraging if the debate which had preceded the adoption of our resolution had shown even a slightly less inflexible attitude on the part of the Soviet Union. I am forced to admit, though I have searched carefully for any crumbs of comfort, that I have found none either in Soviet statements on the disarmament item or under the present item. While statements of other representatives showed at least an open mind towards the possibility of considering compromise proposals which would provide a genuine balance of risks and safeguards to both sides throughout the whole process of disarmament - including the prohibiting of the atomic and hydrogen weapons - the statements which we have had from Soviet representatives sounded as if they had been pieced together from what they have been saying to us for many years past.

I have no intention of rehashing old and unproductive arguments. If the Soviet Government are genuinely interested in relaxing tensions and making progress towards international agreement on prohibiting the bomb as a part of a comprehensive disarmament plan including effective safeguards, then they must talk to us about those safeguards, that is, about control. It is not enough to denounce our proposals and say virtually nothing about their own, as Mr. Vyshinsky did last Thursday. Between now and the time the Disarmament Commission meets we shall all of us have an opportunity for considering and reconsidering our respective positions. In doing so we cannot but be influenced by the realities of our present international situation and by such factors as whether or not the political conference on Korea shall by that time have been permitted to meet. At any rate, when the Disarmament Commission does meet, and if and when the private talks suggested by the Assembly take place, it is my profound hope that attempts at genuine compromise will not be contemptuously brushed aside as they have been during our present debates and a rigid position adopted based on the hypothesis of a false and doctrinaire economic determinism.

Last Thursday the distinguished representative of the Soviet Union devoted a good deal of his time to proving to his own satisfaction that the "profound contradictions" inherent in the capitalistic economy of the United States were leading what he called "reactionary circles" in this country to prepare "to unleash a third world war".

I am not surprised that Mr. Vyshinsky, as is his wont, saw "profound contradictions" in the economy of the United States but it might have corresponded more closely with reality if he had looked for these contradictions in his own reasoning. He mentioned first of all that the current "arms race", as he called it, in this country was leading rapidly to inflation; and then, practically in the same breath, he said that these "reactionary circles" of his were forced to maintain and increase international tension because they were afraid of a depression. Well now, even economic determinism cannot have it both ways. You can pile pelion on ossa if you like, but you should not make accusations which are so directly contradictory that they cancel out.

There is one thing that the conditioned mentality which produced such a distorted version of reality cannot for the life of it see. It is a perennial and inescapable blindspot of Communist mentality. As a result of it, actions are taken that as the distinguished representative of the Dominican Republic said this morning, have a profoundly disturbing effect upon the conscience of other peoples with different values.

A Communist society is by definition as well as by education incapable of understanding and consequently of appreciating that spiritual values are on a different plane from the values of a government or even of a state. From their failure to realize or appreciate this essential difference of values, Communist states have in recent years contributed not a little to increasing international tensions by the shocks they have perhaps unwittingly administered to the rest of mankind who are not blinded in this particular way.

My government finds it difficult to believe that the Soviet Government, and those associated with it, wish to reduce international tension when at the same time they permit, indeed engineer, religious persecution within their own borders; these actions contradict their professed intentions. This is particularly the case in Poland where religious persecution has recently been renewed. Such things as the trial of Bishop Kaczmarek, three priests and a nun for crimes alleged to have been committed before 1947, followed the arrest of Cardinal Wyszynski and the removal of his churchly offices without any charge being laid against him, offends one's sense of justice. They have aroused great indignation in my own country, and certainly do not make for easing of international tension.

I speak of these things ... not in order to provoke an acrimonious debate, but because I feel, as I said, that Soviet leaders do not and cannot appreciate how other peoples feel and judge their behaviour in this matter of religious persecution. It is not something that affects only one church or faith. I have mentioned only one example, but similar instances could unfortunately be given affecting every main branch of Christendom, and indeed the other principal faiths as well. Perhaps one function of this Assembly, which remains at present the only forum in the world where it seems each side can talk to the other, should be to provide an opportunity to both sides to make it clear to the other what, in its opinion, increases international tension. It is in that spirit that I have felt constrained to raise this subject, for I am sure Soviet leaders have little conception how others in our inter-dependent world react to their brutal persecution of those who try to live their lives in the service of something higher than the state.

NOTE - The following is the draft resolution on which the U.S.S.R. based its request for inclusion in the agenda of the eighth session an item on measures to avert the threat of a new world war and to reduce tension in international relations (Doc. A/2485/Rev.1). This was rejected in a paragraph-by-paragraph vote. No vote was taken on the resolution as a whole. After protracted discussion, the First Committee on November 26, 1953 rejected the Soviet resolution in paragraph-by-paragraph voting. Only the first paragraph of the preamble was carried, the vote being 17 in favour (including the Soviet bloc, India, Yugoslavia, Peru, Egypt, Syria and Yemen), none against and 30 abstentions (including Canada). All of the countries which had contributed forces to the United Nations side in the Korean conflict abstained on this vote. As the operative part of the resolution was subsequently defeated, however, the first paragraph of the preamble automatically failed and no voting was required on the resolution as a whole. The second paragraph of the preamble failed by a vote of 7 in favour, 26 against (including Canada) and 18 abstentions.

The General Assembly,

Noting that the cessation of hostilities in Korea is an important contribution to the reduction of tension in international relations, and that it has created more favourable conditions for further action to avert the threat of a new world war,

Noting, at the same time, that in a number of countries the armaments race, far from abating, is being continued on an even greater scale, and that weapons of mass destruction, as a result of the latest advances in the application of atomic energy for this purpose, are becoming ever more destructive and dangerous for many millions of people,

With the object of averting the threat of a new world war and strengthening the peace and security of nations,

1. Declares atomic, hydrogen and other types of weapons of mass destruction to be unconditionally prohibited, and instructs the Security Council to take immediate steps to prepare and implement an international agreement which will ensure the establishment of strict international control over the observance of this prohibition;

2. Recommends to the five permanent members of the Security Council, the United States of America, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom, France and China, which bear the chief responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, that they reduce their armed forces by one-third within one year; and with a view to the alleviation of the burden of military expenditure recommends to the Security Council that it call as soon as possible an international conference for the carrying out by all States of the reduction of armaments;

3. Recognizes that the establishment of military, air and naval bases in the territories of other States increases the threat of a new world war and operates to undermine the national sovereignty and independence of States;

The General Assembly,

Recommends to the Security Council that it take steps to ensure the elimination of military bases in the territories of other States, considering this a matter of vital importance for the establishment of a stable peace and of international security;

4. Condemns the propaganda which is being conducted in a number of countries with the aim of inciting enmity and hatred among nations and preparing a new world war, and calls upon all governments to take measures to put a stop to such propaganda, which is incompatible with the fundamental purposes and principles of the United Nations.
