

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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AN APPALLING ANSWER TO UN PROTESTS

A Statement by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. Howard Green, in the First Committee of the United Nations on October 20, 1961.

I should like to make a very short statement in support of the stand taken by the representatives of Denmark, Japan and Pakistan. In doing so may I first point out that Draft Resolution A/C.1/L.288 is not in competition with the Indian draft resolution at all. As a matter of fact, we in Canada intend to support that Indian draft resolution, and we may have something to say in regard to it in due course. But the United Nations is faced now with a statement that a 50-megaton bomb will be discharged before the end of the month. It may be discharged over this weekend. We have the definite statement from the leader of this great nation, the Soviet Union, that this bomb will be set off before the end of October. May I submit that that is ample reason why the United Nations should deal with this question promptly? If we fail to deal with a question of this magnitude, what point is there in dealing with a great many small issues?

I suggest that this is probably the greatest challenge the United Nations has ever faced. The announcement by Chairman Khrushchov of this intention to explode a 50-megaton bomb, I am sure, brings home to each one of us in this room today the urgency of the matter with which we are concerned in the debate. Even before this latest announcement, the breakdown of the moratorium early in September had caused world-wide concern, which has led to the introduction of draft resolutions in this Committee calling for an end to nuclear testing, including of course the Indian draft resolution. But now we have learnt that this Soviet test series is to be climaxed by the explosion of the 50-megaton thermonuclear bomb. It has already been pointed out, but I repeat, that, when this bomb is added to the current Soviet test series, the result will be a fall-out yield equal to at least two-thirds of that from all the tests conducted by all the nuclear powers from 1945 to 1958, when the voluntary moratorium began.

Soviet Defiance of World Opinion

This surely is an appalling answer to the expressions of alarm and anxiety which have been voiced in the United Nations General Assembly

and of which, I am sure, Chairman Khrushchov is very well aware. If this programme which is announced is executed, it will be in defiance of the wishes of the peoples of the entire world; it will signify contempt for the resolutions and opinions of the United Nations.

On hearing of the Soviet intention to explode this monstrous weapon, my Government prepared and attempted to deliver a solemn protest to the Soviet Government the day before yesterday. The Soviet representative in Ottawa refused to accept delivery of the note on the ground that the proposed detonation of a 50-megaton bomb was a matter of internal concern only to the Soviet Union. Surely it is not possible to contend seriously that filling the atmosphere with radioactive dust is a matter solely of domestic concern.

As a homely analogy illustrating this Soviet argument, let us imagine two neighbours, one of whom proceeds to blow large clouds of poisonous arsenic spray into the air over his garden. This spray is then blown across the garden of his neighbour, covering the vegetables and fruits which the neighbour eats. Would such acts be allowed in any country of the world? The answer is that they certainly would not.

The very fact that the United Nations has been seized year after year with the question of the cessation of nuclear tests, and the very fact that there are expressions of concern from nations in all parts of the world, refute the claim that nuclear testing and its uncontrollable by-products are matters of domestic concern. Fall-out knows no national boundaries. Once released, it affects indiscriminately nations around the world, large and small.

If the Soviet Government will not heed the protests of its neighbours -- and Canada happens to be a neighbour of the Soviet Union -- we have no alternative but to bring to bear through the United Nations the collective moral judgment of the international community.

It is one of the great functions of this world organization to focus world opinion, and here is a case where that should be done. I cannot believe that the Soviet Union would be insensitive to an appeal by this Assembly not to explode this super-bomb, which is bound to add enormously to the radiation hazards we already face. I am sure that the Russian people themselves would welcome a decision on the part of their Government which would prevent this increased danger to their health as to the health of all other peoples.

For these reasons, Canada has co-sponsored the draft resolution introduced by Denmark. If it is to serve its purpose, we believe it should be given absolute priority in the proceedings of this Committee. We have only a few days in which to act; it may be that we have only a few hours in which to act in the United Nations. I sincerely hope that the six-power draft resolution will receive the support of all member states. Representatives will notice that it is worded in the nature of an appeal: "Solemnly appeals ..". I am confident that the leaders of the Soviet Union will heed an expression of world opinion if such an expression is given in the United Nations at this time. I trust that we will do everything to prevent the occurrence of this great world tragedy.