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SEVENTEENTH SESSION

Official Records



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MEETING

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Chairman: Mr. Muhammad ZAFRULLA KHAN
(Pakistan).

Consideration of the agenda of the seventeenth session and allocation of items (continued)

REQUEST FOR THE INCLUSION OF AN ADDITIONAL ITEM IN THE AGENDA OF THE SEVENTEENTH SESSION: ITEM PROPOSED BY THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS (A/5232)

The Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly the inclusion of the item in the agenda.

1. Mr. SEMENOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) proposed that, in view of its importance and urgency, the item should be discussed by the General Assembly in plenary meeting.

2. Mr. YOST (United States of America) said that it would be unreasonable to allocate the item for discussion by the General Assembly in plenary meeting because, as its history showed, it was clearly related to the debate on disarmament and could best be dealt with in the First Committee in conjunction with the disarmament item. He recalled that agreement had been reached with the Soviet Union in a sub-committee of the Conference of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament at Geneva on a declaration condemning propaganda favouring a preventive nuclear war, but that, in the plenary meeting of the Conference, the Soviet Union had abruptly reversed its previous commitment and refused to subscribe to the declaration, which had been worked out after lengthy negotiation.

3. Mr. SEMENOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the United States representative had not given an accurate account of the Geneva discussions. It had been agreed, in the sub-committee, that each delegation would inform its respective Government of the proposals discussed and seek instructions. That had been the only point on which agreement had been reached. In the plenary meeting of the Conference, the USSR representative had made a statement, on instructions from his Government, concerning the matters which should be included in the proposed declaration.

He had proposed, in effect, that the declaration should condemn and prohibit revanchist propaganda, propaganda for the revision of post-war boundaries and propaganda in favour of resort to force against peoples engaged in the struggle for national liberation and independent development. The United States and certain other countries had objected to the inclusion of those specific points.

4. Consequently, the preference expressed by the United States representative for allocation of the item to the First Committee was in fact politically motivated. The USSR considered the threat of a preventive nuclear war to be so great as to warrant a full discussion in the major organ of the United Nations, namely, the General Assembly in plenary meeting.

5. Mr. GODBER (United Kingdom), recalling that he had been present at Geneva during the discussion of the proposed declaration, confirmed that the position had been accurately stated by the United States representative. In deciding on the allocation of the item, the General Committee should be concerned primarily with the orderly planning of the debate. Since the item was closely related to disarmament and, indeed, had been discussed in that connexion at Geneva, it was obviously desirable and preferable that it should be dealt with in the First Committee. In any case, it would ultimately be discussed in plenary meeting.

6. Mr. HSUEH (China) also favoured discussion of the item in the First Committee in the first instance. In connexion with the title of the item, he noted that all kinds of war, not just preventive nuclear war, should be condemned, together with the propaganda inciting to it. He recalled a recent statement of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR which, in his view, clearly belonged to the category of war propaganda to be condemned.

7. Mr. MALITZA (Romania) said that the item was of the greatest urgency and importance and should be discussed in plenary meeting with a sober awareness of the danger to peace arising from the confrontation of huge military forces and the strategy of the balance of terror practised by some States. The Assembly was the most representative organ of the United Nations; it should be enabled to discharge its primary responsibility for the preservation of peace.

8. Mr. SEMENOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) pointed out that it was precisely because the United States and the United Kingdom had rejected the Soviet proposal to condemn propaganda favouring a preventive nuclear war at Geneva that his delegation was appealing to them and to the Assembly to endorse it in New York. The amendments offered by the USSR to the draft discussed at Geneva had been intended to ensure its effectiveness. However, the United States and the United Kingdom, apparently desiring a meaningless declaration, had rejected them. An effective declaration was of the greatest urgency. It should be dis-

cussed and adopted by the General Assembly in plenary meeting.

9. Mr. YOST (United States of America) said that his delegation did not question the importance and urgency of the item. However, in the interests of the orderly conduct of the session, the various aspects of a single question should logically be dealt with in the same body. Since the First Committee was going to consider the report on the Conference of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament, which included an account of the Geneva debate on the item, it should logically be the forum for discussion of the item which the General Committee had decided to include in the agenda.

10. Mr. LEWANDOWSKI (Poland) pointed out that the item was not directly related to the question of disarmament as discussed in the United Nations in the past or as it would be discussed in the First Committee. The urgency of prohibiting propaganda favouring a preventive nuclear war had been enhanced by the failure to achieve disarmament and to ensure that the vast military and scientific development of nations would be used for peaceful purposes. It was imperative for the plenary Assembly to adopt a resolution condemning such propaganda as speedily as possible in order to improve international relations and allay the fears of the masses of the people.

11. Mr. SEMENOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), while conceding that the item was linked with disarmament, emphasized that propaganda favouring a preventive nuclear war was intended to prepare peoples psychologically for a catastrophe which it represented as inevitable. The danger of such propaganda could not be overestimated; that process of preparation could not be allowed to continue. It was therefore logical that the full Assembly should seek to put an end to it.

The Committee decided by 14 votes to 3, with 4 abstentions, to recommend to the General Assembly the allocation of the item to the First Committee.

REQUEST FOR THE INCLUSION OF AN ADDITIONAL ITEM IN THE AGENDA OF THE SEVENTEENTH SESSION: ITEM PROPOSED BY THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS (A/5233)

The Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly the inclusion of the item in the agenda.

12. Mr. SEMENOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that, in view of its importance, the item should be allocated for discussion in plenary meetings.

13. Mr. PATIÑO (Colombia) said that he could not see what real difference there was between the item under discussion and the item on the Second Committee's agenda entitled "Economic and social consequences of disarmament". In deference to the prevailing view he had not objected to its inclusion as a separate item in the agenda of the seventeenth session, but he felt strongly that it should be discussed by the Second Committee in conjunction with the related item. He noted in that connexion that the explanatory memorandum (A/5233) accompanying the request for inclusion of the item repeatedly made reference to the study by the group of expert consultants which was to be the basis of the discussion on economic and social consequences of disarmament. He could not agree with the USSR representative that the relative importance of an item was the factor which determined whether it should be allocated to a committee or to the plenary Assembly. The deciding factor was whether an item

required detailed consideration before it was finally dealt with by the Assembly as a whole. The item proposed by the USSR representative was unquestionably one which required such detailed consideration.

14. Mr. SEYDOUX (France) said that he too questioned the need for the inclusion of the item proposed by the USSR since it was not really a new item but was closely tied in with the economic and social consequences of disarmament, an item which the United Nations had first taken up in 1954. Since it had been decided to include it in the agenda, it should be allocated to the Second Committee, for to allocate it to plenary meetings would simply result in a duplication of effort and would slow down the work of the session.

15. Mr. SEMENOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that those arguments seemed to suggest that the question was purely an economic one, whereas it had political implications of the utmost significance. The Colombian representative had said that he could not see the difference between the proposed additional item and the item on economic and social consequences of disarmament. The difference was that the work which had been done in relation to the latter item was preparatory, revolving as it did round the question whether disarmament would have adverse effects on the economies of the various countries, whereas the new item would relate more specifically to the action to be taken to make the best use of resources released by general and complete disarmament. The fact that at present one-tenth of the world's output of goods and services was being absorbed by the arms race was a major obstacle to economic development. The great scientific and technical revolution launched in the past decade had so far benefited only the highly developed countries, while the under-developed countries had had to defer the implementation of their ambitious development plans for lack of funds. It behooved the General Assembly to discuss in specific terms the ways in which it would be possible to help those countries realize their plans once disarmament had made the necessary resources available. At the same time such a discussion would serve to make clear to world public opinion the fallacy of the argument put forward in some quarters that huge expenditure on armaments was a stimulus to economic development.

16. Mr. YOST (United States of America) observed that it was the Second Committee which would have before it the results of the very extensive preparatory work done on the subject of economic and social consequences of disarmament and it was accordingly that Committee which would be in the best position to discuss the closely related item proposed by the Soviet delegation. To discuss it in a vacuum in plenary meetings would not be practical. He therefore supported the Colombian representative's recommendation that the item should be allocated to the Second Committee.

17. Mr. LEWANDOWSKI (Poland), speaking as the Chairman of the Second Committee, pointed out that the Second Committee's agenda was already quite heavy. Speaking as the representative of Poland, he stated that, in view of the important political aspects of the subject, he was in favour of the Soviet representative's proposal to allocate the new item to plenary meetings. If appropriate action was taken there, the results would serve as a guide for the future work of various United Nations bodies, including the Second Committee.

18. Mr. MALITZA (Romania) supported the view that items of major importance should be allocated to

plenary meetings because that was the only forum in which the discussion of such problems could be followed in its entirety by all delegations regardless of their size. The item could not appropriately be discussed in conjunction with the item on economic and social consequences of disarmament, for the new item related specifically to the steps to be taken to enable all countries to benefit economically from disarmament.

The General Committee decided by 15 votes to 3, with 3 abstentions, to recommend to the General Assembly the allocation of the item to the Second Committee.

The meeting rose at 6.50 p.m.