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Twelfth Session

FIRST COMMITTEE

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND SEVENTIETH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 15 October 1957, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman:

Mr. ABDOL

(Iran)

Regulation, limitation and balanced reduction of all armed forces and all armaments; conclusion of an international Convention (treaty) on the reduction of armaments and the prohibition of atomic, hydrogen and other weapons of mass destruction [24] (continued)

A statement was made in the general debate on the item by:

The Marquess of Santa Cruz (Spain)

Note: The Official Record of this meeting, i.e., the summary record, will appear in mimeographed form under the symbol A/C.1/SR.870. Delegations may submit corrections to the summary record for incorporation in the final version which will appear in a printed volume.

AGENDA ITEM 24

REGULATION, LIMITATION AND BALANCED REDUCTION OF ALL ARMED FORCES AND ALL ARMAMENTS; CONCLUSION OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION (TREATY) ON THE REDUCTION OF ARMAMENTS AND THE PROHIBITION OF ATOMIC, HYDROGEN AND OTHER WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION (continued)

- (a) REPORT OF THE DISARMAMENT COMMISSION
- (b) EXPANSION OF THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE DISARMAMENT COMMISSION AND OF ITS SUB-COMMITTEE
- (c) COLLECTIVE ACTION TO INFORM AND ENLIGHTEN THE PEOPLES OF THE WORLD AS TO THE DANGERS OF THE ARMAMENTS RACE, AND PARTICULARLY AS TO THE DESTRUCTIVE EFFECTS OF MODERN WEAPONS
- (d) DISCONTINUANCE UNDER INTERNATIONAL CONTROL OF TESTS OF ATOMIC AND HYDROGEN WEAPONS

The Marquess of SANTA CRUZ (Spain)(interpretation from Spanish): I should like the first words of the Spanish delegation in the First Committee to be words of congratulation to you, Sir, on your election as Chairman. We wish to congratulate also the Vice-Chairman and the Rapporteur of the Committee on their election.

The Spanish delegation takes up the question of disarmament in the First Committee of the General Assembly imbued with a tremendous sense of responsibility -- responsibility, first of all, to our own people. That people, although it is devoted to national tasks of reconstruction and development, is still extremely concerned with the trend of international life, and feels as much as does any people the great need for security in facing the inevitable dangers ahead of it.

The need for security is not exclusive to the peoples of the great Powers. Other nations also feel that need as greatly, but there is a very important psychological difference. It is true that we are not the ones who have to decide; ours is not the terrible privilege of leading the world down the path to destruction. But this only increases our feeling of defencelessness, impotence and weakness with regard to the unknown tomorrow. Perhaps this may be the cause of opportunism and of the moral reservations we see at every step.

This is the cause for the second type of responsibility before us. Countries such as Spain and the immense majority of us who are not members of the elite of the nuclear Powers have certain ineluctable obligations to fulfil vis-à-vis the international community. This is the obligation not only to raise our voices in universal chorus, which we trust is not the only task before us -- we are not only the chorus in this great tragedy -- but we must also become judges of what the more powerful do, judges of their intentions and purposes, and insist that they adjust their conduct to the dictates of the common weal. And I say this in full knowledge of the strength of our position. After all, speaking frankly and sincerely, it is a well-known fact that a great part of the efforts of the great Powers are intended to mobilize world public opinion on behalf of their views. We are the representatives of world public opinion. Our strength -- and the head of the Spanish delegation stressed this in the general debate -- lies in moral principles and in good sense. Our language is the language of the man in the street and, as the classical Spanish expression puts it, we are proud of it, because we would not be able to defend any other position were it not that of taking first into account the human person and his infinite worth and possibilities.

Therefore, we come up to the discussion of this disarmament question with a second idea in mind: the need to limit our efforts to what is actually possible at this moment. A good diplomatic triumph on the part of the West and concessions on the part of the Soviet Union coincided at a point where, although only partial agreement was possible, it at least was achieved. In this sense, I feel that the meetings of the Sub-Committee in London have been extremely important since, without them, very little chance would have existed even to have held our debate today. After many years of fruitless negotiations, a series of reciprocal concessions were made, and the problem has been placed on an accessible level.

It is the fervent hope of my delegation that this hope will not be dissipated and that the recent and important scientific developments will contribute to encouraging, and not to destroying, the possibility of a final agreement. But does this possibility exist? The representative of the United States, Mr. Lodge, in his statement to the Disarmament Commission,

gave us a balance sheet of concessions which led to some type of concurrence. The Soviet Union accepted the idea of a partial agreement and also recognized the usefulness of both air and ground inspection to prevent surprise attacks. Likewise, it has accepted the idea of control as necessary for the efficient inspection of nuclear experiment cutbacks. The West has admitted, on its part, that the armed forces should be reduced in later stages, as the Soviet Union had requested. The West also accepted a two-year period for the halting of nuclear experiments, but with the understanding that an agreement will be reached in principle on the curtailing of the manufacture of new military weapons. The West also agreed to the inclusion, in the question of inspection, of land observation posts in strategic positions. On all these points there has been concurrence, or at least understanding.

However, fundamental differences still exist that can be reduced as follows: firstly, to tie in the cutbacks in nuclear experiments with discontinuation of the manufacture of fissionable materials for new weapons, and, secondly, the establishment of efficient controls. Both these points of divergence reveal that mistrust still obtains between them.

In all good faith, no State could oppose a suspension of nuclear experiments or a limitation of armaments or the prohibition of the use of atomic weapons, were it sure that this suspension, limitation and prohibition were to be universal, simultaneous and effective.

In questions of life and death for States, good reasons are not sufficient. It is cold facts that must weigh. The Soviet proposal to commit themselves not to use atomic weapons without previously deciding on a cessation of production and the destruction of stockpiles is not a realistic approach. We still all bear too closely in mind the impressive ceremony in the Hall of Mirrors at the Palais de Versailles, where the high contracting parties, on the basis of the requests made by two great statesmen, Briand and Kellogg, solemnly obligated themselves to renounce war as an instrument of national policy. And I would say further that the present political map of the world owes its physiognomy of defensive blocs to this climate of mistrust and this need for security and realism. There is nothing especially attractive in the present defensive grouping of countries which should make countries seek them out for themselves

or aspire to membership in them. The feeling of solidarity which they may produce can much more easily and pleasantly be achieved by other means. The defensive groupings of countries of today, which, as I say, are a consequence of the lack of confidence, furthermore -- and this was stressed to us in the general debate by the representative of the Philippines -- have also onerous repercussions on the economy of the participating countries. Therefore, these defensive alliances do not exist because people enjoy them; they only exist because there is no substitute for them. Let us therefore heed the voices of those who tell us that the nuclear experiments must cease.

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We are absolutely convinced of that. Let us, however, bear in mind at the same time the fact that that agreement alone will not accomplish anything in the field of disarmament. Such an agreement leaves the door open to an increase rather than a reduction of stockpiles of atomic bombs and does not ensure that atomic materials will be used for peaceful purposes only. Let us not believe that, per se, the suspension of these experiments is immediately going to improve the present position, in the absence of such measures as the cessation of the production of material for new weapons, the conversion of existing atomic stockpiles to peaceful purposes and the establishment of a system of inspection. If all these measures are not taken, the simple cessation of experiments will only increase the mistrust of those whose possibilities of advancement will thereby be limited.

Let us turn for a moment to the question of control. It is not our purpose here to discuss the technical aspects of control, which may be extremely difficult to set down. The Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the United Kingdom referred to the need to have a group of experts reply to the questions involved in the practical application of a control system. International life today is characterized by daily increases in regulation activities. This is a requirement of the supra-national groups. Countries voluntarily group themselves together, and the forms of control of the organizations thereby established evolve naturally. Therefore, it cannot seem strange to anyone that in the field of disarmament the idea of control should have emerged as an immediate possibility for solving many problems. This subject is treated in all the different proposals which have been presented on this matter. In all those proposals five aspects appear: first, control to ensure the fulfilment of the obligations to suspend nuclear experiments; secondly, control of the cessation of the production of fissionable materials for weapons purposes and the use of existing materials for peaceful purposes only; thirdly, land and air inspection to avoid surprise attacks; fourthly, supervision of the reduction of armed forces and conventional weapons to the agreed limits; and fifthly, regulation of the use of intercontinental ballistic missiles. On some of these points the Soviet Union has agreed with the Western world.

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To those who deny the need or even the possibility of effective control, I would say that inspection is not domination. It could be regarded as such if inspection were imposed unilaterally. If, however, the inspection is freely accepted and is carried out by an international body, it is not domination; it is security.

I must also stress the importance which disarmament in the field of conventional weapons and the limitation of armed forces have for the smaller nations, to the point where these instruments will be used only for legitimate defence and not for aggressive purposes. It is an error to believe that the existence of nuclear weapons renders war with conventional weapons impossible. Limited war is possible when the political objectives themselves are limited, when national power is not involved and when no belligerent is ready to run the risk of an all-out atomic war. It is only limited wars which have been fought since the atomic weapon was first used. Of course, those wars amounted to total wars for the victims. There is very little difference between dying slowly from a sword wound and being pulverized instantly by a nuclear explosion. Death is death.

Humanity fears war. What better proof of that fact can be found than this debate, which is a result of the tremendous desire for peace, tranquility, coexistence and security of all the nations represented here? We believe that war is not inevitable. It might be said that this is a very easy position for a Spaniard to adopt, because Spain has not taken part in any European conflict since it fought in legitimate self-defence in the war of independence at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Spain's glorious tradition of catholic universalism, in the etymological meaning of the word, demonstrates that we have never committed the sin of nationalistic heresy. We are not egotistical isolationists. Like other Powers, we carry out our responsibilities and, therefore, we do not categorically refuse to fight, with weapons in our hands, to defend justice and international peace in the event of aggression.

It would be shameful for statesmen if, whilst the biological and physical sciences, with incredible audacity, are conquering for man the domain of space and of the micro-cosmic world of genes and cells, we were not able to turn into social truth the words contained in the preamble of the Charter of the United Nations, "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind". The third world war obviously would destroy all humanity, without any distinction between belligerents and neutrals. No, my delegation is optimistic. We do not believe that war is inevitable. It is true that in history war has been a constant, even up to our own days, but this says nothing either for or against the essential problem, that is, whether war is necessary to human society. Whether it is or not, whether or not it is inevitable, we can correct this by making war avoidable.

What has occurred so far? War is not a phenomenon which biologically is necessary or ineluctable. We have been told that war is one of the natural laws of living beings, that in it a manifest violence obtains, a prescribed fury inflicting a degree of violence and death on the very limits of life itself. But in that case war would be nothing but the consequence of the instinct of self-preservation and procreation of man and animals, giving us death in order to safeguard life. But those who say this do not recognize the specific character of human action. No matter what its precedents may be, war cannot be understood purely from the point of view of biological laws, because these laws now have a new factor added to them, that of the spirit.

Animals are subject to the determination of natural laws, and one has only to discover the stimulus in order to agree on what the conditioned reflex will be. But man is not like that because, besides being a living animal, he is a free living animal. War is a conflict of power and free will of those collective, spiritual persons that we call States. An illustrious Spanish philosopher once said that war is not an instinct, it is an invention. So far, all wars have been desired by man, they all have had causes, but all these causes or motives for wars, whether they be psychological, economic or ideological, could have been more easily or better obtained by other social techniques.

The representative of Ireland, Mr. Aiken, pointed out in the general debate that when the weapons of the armed forces reach a certain volume, just as when the critical mass of fissionable bodies is reached, an explosion occurs. The old theory, then, is valid, that war is the inevitable product of a mad technique. However, leaving aside the other remedies for all this, the objective we are all seeking is to reduce armaments before we get to this point of the critical mass. The truth is that war is not an inevitable product of modern techniques. All matters of importance pertaining to war were already set in the minds of the neolithic man, although in those days, instead of using hydrogen bombs to kill one another, man used bows and arrows and even sticks. However, whether sticks or atomic weapons are used, or even the jawbone of an ass or intercontinental missiles, the truth is that war is not inevitable. The most primitive and innocuous weapons have become more and more devastating, but they are still at the service of the art of warfare, they are at the service of man, because weapons, whether atomic or not, do not shoot themselves. Arms, therefore, will make war more probable, more bloody, and more destructive, but certainly not more necessary.

War is an utterly political phenomenon, subject to the laws of politics, in which, instead of writing notes, war is waged. War is only a violent form of politics and policy, the policy which is the fulfilment of the desire for power, to realize a concrete plan for the commonweal. War, therefore, is essentially a social and historical phenomenon. War, as in the case of any other techniques at the service of mankind, has its own structure, but not an independent logic. War is still only an instrument, but if this be the case, and if war is a social, political and historical phenomenon, a mere instrument at the service of the will of man, if many biological, psychological, ideological or economic factors may condition it, they will never determine it and take away from man his last decision. If this were not so, then war would be inevitable.

I am not only talking of war in concrete terms, I also include the abstract war, because war is the consequence of the determined structure of international society. Let us turn this political plurality into a universe, and war will be impossible. It is only by a political organization of the world that we can carry

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out the suggestion of His Holiness Pope Pius XII in his message in 1944, when he said:

"We may be able to eliminate all danger of war from our political and historical horizon. In this society of peoples there must exist an authority which will be a true and effective authority over all States Members, but each Member must have an equal right to relative sovereignty. Only then will the spirit of healthy democracy enter the vast and difficult road of foreign policies."

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The Holy Father continued:

"In this body for the maintenance of peace, a body vested with supreme authority by common agreement would also be vested the task of nipping in the bud any threat of isolated or collective aggression."

And that body with those functions is the United Nations.

I should like to take the liberty of repeating here what I said at the Inter-Parliamentary Conference in London: "If we really want disarmament, let us begin by arming the United Nations morally and militarily."

Other speakers have stated in the General Assembly that the prospects before the world today are not too pleasant. That is true, and it is difficult to prove anything else when we are faced with the reality that is before us. But this sad reality must be, to strong spirits, a greater incentive to act. I do not say that there is much in this suggestion, but it is the truth and we have no choice. In the general debate I heard Mr. Gromyko mention a proverb to the effect that bad weather is better than no weather at all. Although apparently paradoxical, this is a true reflection of the world today. We may think that there is no dilemma because one of the sides of the dilemma is an absolute vacuum, and man by his very nature denies the existence of an absolute vacuum. Therefore, we do not have to choose between pessimism and optimism; there is only one issue.

We have had presented to us a twenty-three Power draft resolution, inviting the Assembly to give certain directives to the States affected by the question of disarmament, particularly the States Members of the Sub-Committee. The Spanish delegation approves of this proposal. However, we reserve our right to make a further intervention if we deem it necessary after hearing the other representatives who, obviously, will wish to speak on this matter. We are in favour of the immediate cessation of nuclear tests, subject to a system of control, for which observation posts will have to be set up as soon as the consent of all interested parties has been attained.

At the same time, the Spanish delegation supports the measure regarding the prohibition of the manufacture of atomic material for military purposes and the devotion of all atomic material to peaceful purposes, the destruction of all atomic weapons now in existence, the reduction of conventional armaments and

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armed forces to agreed levels, the setting up of a plan for inspection to prevent surprise attacks and a system of inspection to ensure the utilization for peaceful purposes of materials devoted to the production of ballistic missiles.

These measures can and must lead us to the final objective of the nations which have succeeded here in producing a complete plan of disarmament, a juridical system which subjects force to right, from which would result the possibility of ensuring the common good of man. No possibility of agreement must be left unexplored. The great Powers have the duty to do everything possible and to leave no stone unturned in reaching an agreement. My delegation expresses its sincerest wishes for their success.

The CHAIRMAN (interpretation from French): There are no more speakers on the list for this morning. If no one else wishes to speak, I shall be obliged to adjourn the meeting. We shall meet again this afternoon at 3 o'clock.

The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.