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MEETING

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CONTENTS

Page

Order of discussion of agenda items (*continued*) 19

Chairman: Mr. Mario AMADEO (Argentina).

Order of discussion of agenda items (A/C.1/844, A/C.1/ L.281, A/C.1/L.282) (continued)

1. Mr. KISELEV (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that he was surprised at the proposal by the United States and the United Kingdom that the Committee should give priority to the question of the urgent need for a treaty to ban nuclear weapons tests, in view of the fact that for several years, and notably at the Geneva Conference on the Discontinuance of Nuclear Weapons Tests, those States had prevented all progress towards that goal by their unco-operative and uncompromising attitude on the USSR proposals. It was plain that the Governments of the United States and the United Kingdom wished to make use of the Committee in order to justify their nuclear arms policy and to be able to continue unchecked their preparations for a thermo-nuclear war.
2. The United States representative had said that the Soviet Union had been preparing in secret for months for the tests it had just carried out in the atmosphere. There was no doubt, however, that the underground tests which the United States had hastened to carry out on the first convenient pretext required considerably longer preparation. The Soviet Union could obviously not stand idly by while the West feverishly built underground installations in which to explode new types of nuclear devices and while France, a member of NATO, was carrying out its series of nuclear tests. The counter-measures that the USSR had taken had been necessary for its own security; their object was to prevent the outbreak of a new war.
3. The problem of the cessation of nuclear tests must be solved within the framework of general and complete disarmament, not by itself. The question of nuclear weapons tests would then no longer arise and the enemies of peace would no longer be able to employ subterfuges and pretexts to deceive the peoples.
4. The Byelorussian delegation whole-heartedly supported the Soviet proposal that the question of general and complete disarmament should be considered first, together with the other items relating to nuclear tests and weapons.
5. Mr. URQUIA (El Salvador) said he hoped that the procedural discussion would soon end so that the Committee might take up the questions before it—questions that had been made more urgent by the ending of the suspension of nuclear tests.
6. The problem of disarmament, which jurists and statesmen had been trying to solve for centuries and which had been the constant concern of the League of Nations and the United Nations, was too complex for the Committee to be able to examine all its elements simultaneously. Logically, therefore, a beginning should be made with the element on which negotiations had been fairly advanced at the time of their interruption, namely, the conclusion of a treaty to ban nuclear tests.
7. Between the two extremes represented by the Indian and USSR proposals, the Committee would be taking a prudent and practical position if it gave priority, as proposed by the United States (A/C.1/L.281), to the simultaneous consideration of the two items relating to nuclear tests. In view of the close connexion between those two items and of the limited time available to the Committee there would be every advantage in considering them simultaneously.
8. Mr. SOSA RODRIGUEZ (Venezuela) said he recognized that the question of disarmament was the most important of all, and that the question of the suspension of nuclear tests was part of the general problem of disarmament. But whereas the other aspects of rearmament represented only a future danger, nuclear and thermo-nuclear tests were already causing harm to mankind by increasing atmospheric radio-activity, with consequences which could not yet be foreseen and which would one day be irremediable. Consequently, the discontinuance of nuclear tests could not be made contingent on the conclusion of a treaty on general and complete disarmament; for such a treaty, because of its complexity, could not be concluded in the near future. For that reason the items relating to the cessation of nuclear tests must be given priority. It was essential that, as the United States and the United Kingdom proposed, the great Powers should conclude a treaty laying down practical ways and means for ensuring that testing would not be resumed. But it was nevertheless possible, and indeed desirable, that the General Assembly should also decide at the current session in favour of the immediate suspension of nuclear tests, as the Indian delegation had proposed. That decision should be followed by the conclusion of a treaty between the nuclear Powers; but pending that event the fact that the General Assembly had taken a stand would be sufficient to ensure a provisional ban on nuclear tests.
9. Consequently, the proposal made by the United States and the United Kingdom and that submitted by India were mutually complementary, not mutually exclusive, for the Committee could very well recommend at the same time the immediate cessation of nuclear tests and the conclusion of a treaty to safeguard that measure. But whether or not a treaty was under consideration, the pollution of the atmosphere must be stopped. It was regrettable, in that connexion, that the Soviet Union, in defiance of public opinion and

the resolutions adopted by the United Nations, should have undertaken a series of nuclear explosions in the atmosphere, already numbering twenty. It was necessary and urgent, therefore, that the General Assembly should not only recommend a voluntary cessation of nuclear tests but should demand a guarantee, in the form of a treaty between the nuclear Powers. His delegation accordingly considered that items 72 and 73 of the General Assembly's agenda should be given priority. Since it would be easier to arrive at a rapid decision on the immediate cessation of nuclear tests than to formulate the terms of a treaty, it would be better to begin with item 73, as the Indian delegation had proposed, on the understanding that while it was under discussion representatives could also address themselves to item 72.

10. Mr. SANCHEZ Y SANCHEZ (Dominican Republic) said that it was urgently necessary to put a stop to nuclear testing, that immediate consideration should be given to the conclusion of a treaty for that purpose and that general disarmament must be accomplished. In the prevailing war psychosis it was natural that the small countries should be the most disturbed, since they could not defend themselves against the consequences of political differences between the large States. The small nations must therefore create a current of international public opinion which could put a check on all inordinate ambitions.

11. Armaments were a burden on national economies and a threat to peace. However, so long as war did not break out they were only a potential danger, whereas radio-active fall-out was a real danger. The most urgent task, therefore, was to bring about the discontinuance of nuclear tests. Agenda items 72 and 73 could be dealt with in a single resolution that would, first, provide for the immediate suspension of nuclear and thermo-nuclear tests and, second, recognize the urgent need to negotiate a treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons tests under effective international control. If the Committee decided to consider items 72 and 73 separately, it would be logical to begin with item 73. Admittedly, a suspension of tests would only be effective if it was followed by a formal treaty on the subject; but pending the conclusion of such a treaty, which would be very long in the drafting, it was intolerable that the atmosphere should be polluted by nuclear tests.

12. Mr. SHAHA (Nepal) moved the adjournment of the meeting under rule 119 of the rules of procedure.

The motion for adjournment was adopted by 40 votes to 12, with 31 abstentions.

The meeting rose at 5.25 p.m.