FIRST COMMITTEE

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE ONE THOUSAND AND FORTY-FIFTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 6 November 1959, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. MATSCH (Austria)

Question of French nuclear tests in the Sahara \sqrt{68} (continued)

Note: The Official Record of this meeting, i.e. the summary record,
will appear in mimeographed form under the symbol A/C.1/8R.1045.
Delegations may submit corrections to the summary record for
incorporation in the final version which will appear in a printed
volume.
QUESTION OF FRENCH NUCLEAR TESTS IN THE SAHARA (A/4183; A/C.1/L.238, A/C.1/L.238/Add.1) (continued)

The CHAIRMAN: Before continuing our discussion on the item "Question of French nuclear tests in the Sahara", I should like to draw the Committee's attention to the fact that the Federation of Malaya and Japan have added themselves to the list of sponsors of the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/L.238. An addendum to this effect will be distributed shortly under the symbol number of A/C.1/L.238/Add.1.

Mr. Krishna MECKON (India): The item that we are discussing this morning is one of a series that relates to tests of nuclear weapons, having reference either to explosions that have occurred in the past, those that are projected and those that may occur in the future. While these items have some relationship, my country, in common with a large number of others, and finally by the whole Membership of the Organization, agreed for a separate discussion of this matter. That is due to the urgency of this issue and also because of the terrain on which this explosion is taking place.

If I may introduce a personal note in this matter, though my delegation will take full part in the item that stands in our name and has submitted resolutions along with others, I myself may not be able to be present here, and if I overlap into the general problem I hope the Committee will forgive me.

We make no apologies for the importance we attach to this project of the Republic of France in regard to entering the field of atomic explosions. Before I address myself to this subject, may I say that on behalf of the French Government, Mr. Jules Moch has been the exponent. This does create a great deal of embarrassment because of the great respect in which he is held in this Committee, the well known devotion he has to the cause of disarmament and his great knowledge of the subject, which does not always mean that all the available data on a particular point comes out in a statement. It is part of the rights of an exponent of a case to present the aspects of the problem which naturally advance his argument. This applies to all of us. It is for the
Committee to place the arguments side by side and to come to its own conclusions. I am not for a moment suggesting that the representative of France has become the devil's advocate in this case, but simply to say that there are other aspects to these matters.

Secondly, we are all glad to note that both the representative of Morocco and the representative of France have found it possible to pay each other compliments with regard to the way this problem is being tackled. That probably is due to the facility of the French language or their long association with each other and their hopes of friendship in the future.

So far as my country is concerned, we have been interested in this problem and indeed brought before this Assembly in 1954, after a statement by our Prime Minister in our Parliament on 2 April of the same year, the idea of the suspension of nuclear tests, the tests of these weapons of mass destruction, these nuclear and thermonuclear weapons. During the years it has gained gradual currency and countries that thought that this did not belong to the disarmament problem, that it does not affect humanity very much -- and indeed at one time it was argued that it was in their interests that there should be explosions of this kind in the world -- and we are at last moving to a situation when at Geneva, largely by the process of direct negotiation, the main Powers concerned, popularly called the nuclear Powers or the members of the "Nuclear Club", have made some progress towards agreement. While this Committee has no cognizance of the advance reached by any communication to it, so much is published and is not contradicted that we find in magazines relating to this matter that seventeen points of agreement have been reached. While at first one thought that these were insignificant ones, looking through the contents of them they do represent substantial advance, and what remains is with regard to the staffing on the control posts, on-site inspection and the veto. While these are formidable subjects, the very fact that agreements have been reached on other matters gives one the hope that progress is being made. This is a very relevant consideration.
The application of France to join the "Nuclear Club" comes at a time when we hope the club will be wound up. Therefore, the idea of giving oxygen to this particular animal is not so welcome to everybody concerned. The delegation of India at a later stage introduced in this Committee a resolution which it thought would assist the advance of this project of the cessation of nuclear tests by suggesting that there should be talks on a technical basis because the United Kingdom delegation at that time, with the knowledge it had at its disposal, advised the Committee that while it had a great deal of sympathy with this idea, with the hope of suspending nuclear tests, the question of detectibility was difficult and therefore the suspension must wait or could not be carried out, apart from other objections.
It was at that time in 1957 we proposed in draft resolution A/C.1/L.176/Rev.4, Annex I, that a scientific committee should be established, and requested the States concerned, in view of the doubts expressed about the detectability of explosions and the need to dispel those doubts and also to provide against possible evasions, to agree forthwith to the nomination of a scientific-technical commission consisting of scientific-technical experts, representing the differing views together with other eminent scientific-technical participation to be agreed upon by the aforementioned representatives.

The Assembly in its wisdom did not find it possible to carry this draft resolution, but its fate was 38 against, 22 for, and 20 abstentions. But the ideas were incorporated, as usual, in a little more anaemic resolution which was adopted -- we voted for it -- by 79 to 2, on the general principle of getting the best we could in the hope that it would be improved, and that is resolution 1148 (XII).

So, various aspects of progress have taken place, and it is at this time that the question of the explosion in the Sahara arises. Now, I think the simplest and the briefest way of dealing with it would be to look at the presentation of this subject by its sponsors on the one hand, and the reply given by the representative of France.

We have, for the purpose of brevity again, tried to summarize Mr. Jules Moch's answers to them. He says, first of all, "the matter is exaggerated." Now, here we want to place this, so far as we can, in its proper context. The issue here is not the exploding of one bomb -- whether it be a baby bomb or other bomb -- because in the context of the Hiroshima bomb, the present bombs are giants -- and that was a small one. But it was a small bomb that released all this trouble, that created the whole chain of development in this direction. So, when the representative of France says that "the matter is exaggerated" we are going to take the following things into account.
(Mr. Krishna Menon, India)

First of all it has to be taken from the point of view of those who are against the explosions on general grounds, and as a danger to the world. It has also to be taken from the point of view of the people who live near by. Indeed the Indonesian Government at one time made serious protests with regard to the explosions in Christmas Island, in which they were more concerned than the explosions in Siberia. Therefore, we cannot agree with the fact that "the matter is exaggerated" because any more development at all in this field is something that must be regarded as deplorable. But over and above that, is it suggested that the Government of France is going to explode just this one hundred thousand ton bomb, and no more? If that is so, then this problem assumes an aspect which is even more deplorable because the experimentation is merely for the purpose of letting off one firecracker as a demonstration. Then, all that it does is to exacerbate feelings in the African continent, and the worst part of it, to reverse the process which this Assembly has at last set in motion and accepted by the Powers concerned, and the process which has made some progress in Geneva. Therefore, small as the bomb may be, limited to one as it may be -- it has not been so stated -- and with all the precautions the French Government proposes to take -- the very idea of taking precautions implies that there are dangers -- and therefore, however small it is, it is a move in the reverse direction. And this argument that the French test would be negligible in quantity of fission energy is therefore one we cannot accept.

We also have the repetition of the usual arguments, already introduced by the then representative of the United Kingdom at that time that there is plenty of natural radiation, and therefore a little more does not matter. My delegation has always answered it by a parallel. We merely pointed out that normally the human body carries on it, for every square inch, about 300 pounds of weight. For that reason, would any one of us agree to carry another square inch? That would be a burden. Therefore, it is not correct to argue that there is plenty of natural radiation, and that proportionally to that radiation a little more does not matter. Nature makes allowances for that; we have grown accustomed to that; our genetic conditions and processes are all adapted to that. So this
argument which has been put forward over and over again by the United Kingdom in
the past, before they became active participants in the processes of disengagement
in this matter, is now adopted by France.

But, as against that, since it has come from such a distinguished source, it is necessary for the Assembly to repeat that we cannot agree to the
minimization, the presentation of these facts as though it does not matter. Any explosion of this kind, anything that leads to more ionizing radiation, is harmful
to the people around, to those who are handling it, and to the world as a whole.

I make no apologies for again quoting documents which have been published and
which have been released since our last meeting. The first of these is from the
hearings before the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, Congress of the United States:

"It was generally agreed that in considering acceptable exposure limits in
the context of worldwide environmental contamination from fallout, the best
assumption that can be made at present concerning the relationship of
biological effect to radiation dose is to assume that any dose, however small,
produces some biological effect and that this effect is harmful."

Nothing could be more categorical than that.

"The testimony made it clear that much difficulty now exists in evaluating
the hazards of environmental contamination from fallout. This is because
of the difficulty in attempting to apply to whole populations exposed to
fallout the concepts behind 'maximum permissible dose' and 'maximum
permissible concentration', which were developed for occupational exposures
to individuals under controlled conditions." (Fallout from Nuclear Weapons
Tests -- Summary Analysis of Hearings, May 5-8, 1959, page 7 -- Joint
Committee on Atomic Energy, Congress of the United States.)

We get the same things from various other people. The National Planning
Association of the United States refers to this and says:

"In problems of world-wide contamination, strontium-90 and cesium-137
are particularly important. Their half-lives are twenty-eight and
thirty-eight years respectively, and so they do not die out in the long time
required for distribution via the stratosphere. Strontium is similar to
calcium and is therefore concentrated in the bones, where it can produce
tumors." (A Special Committee Report, May 1958, page 15)
Another American authority on this states that if a thermonuclear blast such as the one on Bikini in March 1954 had exploded during the Crusades between 1080 A.D. and 1299 A.D., it would have taken until the present century for the genetic damage to be erased out of the human population.

Another source, dated 8 May 1959, published in the Washington Post and Times Herald stated:

"A new danger from past atomic weapons tests was described at a Congressional hearing yesterday.

"It is radioactive-iodine which concentrates in the thyroid. It is an atomic-fission product which loses fifty per cent of its radioactivity every eight days.

"Because iodine-131 concentrates in the thyroid, which is a relatively small gland, extremely small amounts can result in relatively high doses ..."
Then we also have one of these statements coming from Oak Ridge in Tennessee:

"Female fertility has been found far more vulnerable to radiation than has long been believed, it was reported here today.

"The tests with comparatively low exposures to radiation sources, were done on mice. But there is no reason to believe the same sterilizing effects would not occur in humans, said biologist Liane Russell of Oak Ridge, Tenn."

Then we have the Russians, who take second place in test explosions.

"Professor Lebedinsky of the Soviet Academy of Medical Sciences said human subjects who had received relatively small doses of gamma radiation from 'hot' cobalt for unspecified therapeutic purposes suffered observable depressions in their brain rhythms thirty seconds after the experiments began."

We come now to that source from which no exaggeration will come, that is, the British:

"It should however be evident," says Mr. Orbuck in Nature, "that in a matter like this -- a matter of life and death for hundreds of thousands -- one should act on the basis of the more pessimistic view until convincing evidence for the more optimistic one has been furnished. This seems also the opinion of the Medical Research Council ... In our view," said the Medical Council "it is not possible at this time to decide whether there is or is not a threshold dose concerned in the induction of leukemia and cancer, and the only scientific attitude to the problem at present is one of suspended judgement. Nevertheless, the significance of the alternative points of view in determining the ultimate assessing of risk should be clearly understood so that those who have the responsibility of acting on such assessments should be fully aware of the alternative possibilities that need to be taken into account."

I would like to say here that this is the most conservative British statement one can find. The bulk of British scientific opinion is far stronger than this. There are so many quotations that I do not want to read out at the present moment which refer to the harmful results that have already occurred and to the fact that these results are inevitable.
"The International Commission on Radiological Protection has issued figures -- about to be made public -- which indicate that the 'permissible' limit of strontium-90 in milk and food should be lowered about 60 per cent.

"The National Committee on Radiation Protection, which sets limits for the United States, issued figures last Thursday which, when applied to milk and food, raises the strontium-90 limit 25 per cent."

I will not tax the Committee with further extracts from my outside sources, but I will go on to United Nations sources.

The Secretary-General is responsible for this, although he himself has not written these reports. Mr. Jules Moch relies on the United Nations Scientific Committee. India is a member of this Committee. This is what Mr. Moch said:

"All the figures that I have given have been taken either from the report of our Scientific Committee -- which my colleagues will easily be able to locate..." (A/C.1/PV.1045, page 26)

Then a part of this Scientific Committee's report is quoted, which incidentally, may I say, is already a year old. The Indian representative on this Committee made the following proposal, which is relevant:

"The exposure of mankind to ionizing radiation at present arises mainly from natural sources, from medical and industrial procedures, and from environmental contamination due to nuclear explosions. The industrial, research and medical applications expose only part of the population, while natural sources and environmental sources, expose the whole population. The artificial sources to which man is exposed during his work in industry, and in scientific research, are of value in science and technology. Their use is controllable, and exposures can be reduced by perfecting protection and safety techniques." (A/3838, page 41, footnote to para. 54)

Now, if I may interpose here, Mr. Moch's argument is that protection can be introduced in other cases. But here the scientific people say that their use for research purposes is controllable.

"Radioactive contamination of the environment resulting from explosions of nuclear weapons constitutes a growing increment to world-wide radiation levels." (Ibid.)

This concludes:

"... these hazards, by their very nature, are beyond the control of the exposed persons. The physical and biological data contained in the report
lead to the conclusion that it is undesirable to allow any general rise in world-wide contamination because of its harmful effects and that any activity which produces such rise should be avoided. Nuclear tests are the main source at present which produce such a rise." (Ibid.)

This was moved by the Indian delegation as an amendment to the resolution that was finally passed. The significance of it is that in favour of the amendment were Brazil, France, India, Japan and the United States of America. So the representative of France, in putting forward this view, is speaking against scientific opinion on behalf of his country submitted in the Scientific Committee by Professor Jammet, who was the Chief of the Isotopes Service of the Civic Hospital. He serves as an atomic, hydrogen and radio pathologist.

From France has come the greatest contributions in this field from the time the Curies first discovered radium up to the present time. We would not join issue with the representative of France about the scientific calibre or the place because he has said that he has consulted scientists and so on. My delegation still takes the view that in no circumstances can it be argued that the fall-out from the tests that have taken place, which now continues and will continue for many, many years, has not had just technical results but results in bulk on the populations and the generations to be born.

As against this report quoted, may we read another part of the Scientific Committee's report, which is in document A/5838 and is dated June, 1958, one year old:

"Many may prove to be unusually vulnerable to ionizing radiations..." (A/5838, page 39, paragraph 37)

"...the opinion seems justified that even a very small dose to the human foetus may involve some risk of injurious effects if received during a critical period of pregnancy." (Ibid., page 40, paragraph 38)

"Exposure of gonads to even the smallest doses of ionizing radiations can give rise to mutant genes which accumulate, are transmissible to the progeny and are considered to be, in general, harmful to the human race. As the persons who will be affected will belong to future generations, it is important to minimize undue exposures of populations to such radiation and so to safeguard the well-being of those who are still unborn." (Ibid., paragraph 49)
"Radioactive contamination of the environment resulting from explosions of nuclear weapons constitutes a growing increment to world-wide radiation levels. This involves new and largely unknown hazards to present and future populations; these hazards, by their very nature, are beyond the control of the exposed persons. The Committee concludes that all steps designed to minimize irradiation of human populations will act to the benefit of human health. Such steps include the avoidance of unnecessary exposure resulting from medical, industrial and other procedures for peaceful uses on the one hand and the cessation of contamination of the environment by explosions of nuclear weapons on the other. The Committee is aware that considerations involving effective control of all these sources of radiation" -- including the cessation of the contamination of the environment by explosions of nuclear weapons -- "involve national and international decisions which lie outside the scope of its work. (Ibid., page 41, paragraph 54)

In paragraph 55, the Committee definitely says:

"Even the smallest amounts of radiation are liable to cause deleterious genetic, and perhaps also somatic effects."

"It is clear that medical and occupational exposure, and the testing of nuclear weapons, can be influenced by human action, and that natural radiation and the fall-out of radioactive material already injected into the stratosphere, cannot." (Ibid., pages 41 and 42, paragraph 55)

This last paragraph that I quoted is important because Mr. Jules Moch refers to natural radiation. We cannot control that but we can control this one.

"Even a slow rise in the environmental radioactivity in the world, whether from weapon tests or any other sources, might eventually cause appreciably damage to large populations before it could be definitely identified..." (Ibid., page 42, paragraph 56)

Then this report gives a table, Table II, which says that an estimated total of 25,000 to 150,000 cases of leukemia will ultimately occur if tests are stopped in 1958 from tests already held and that an estimated total of 2,500 to 100,000 genetic effects will occur in subsequent years from tests already held. That is to say, the explosions that have already taken place have a progressively deleterious effect upon humanity.

From his own countrymen comes an appeal in regard to this matter.
On 30 July 1959, twenty-seven French scientists appealed to the French Government or made their views known in regard to the French bomb. This is what they said:

"Since Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the danger of nuclear war has been a source of constant concern to mankind. In France and throughout the world a very broad movement of opinion has developed to eliminate this danger. Hundreds of millions of signatures were collected to the Stockholm Appeal, launched by the World Peace Movement. Other groupings took action along similar lines and more and more scientists are speaking out."

This is part of the appeal made by these people that I am going to read out. I cannot read out the whole of it because it would take too long. But these are the relevant parts of what was said by the French scientists:

"Continued nuclear weapon testing is doubly dangerous in that it is an important factor in the arms race and involves grave biological dangers. There are perhaps differences of appreciation on the importance of the biological hazards, but no expert disputes that they exist, and it may be said that every nuclear weapon test damages the health and life of a great number of people. As new results are made known, it is becoming clear that the fixation of radioactive elements, particularly strontium-90 in the human body, takes place much more rapidly and in greater quantities than indicated by the initial calculations."

Another part of the statement of the French scientists says the following:

"Any act that tends to oppose the conclusion of an agreement on stopping nuclear weapons tests is a dangerous act. This would be true of the announced explosion of the French atomic bomb. It should, first of all, be pointed out that this would necessarily open the door to other tests, whereas one of the vital problems facing mankind is the stopping of these test explosions."

There we have scientific evidence from all the continents and all the countries concerned in this matter. I read out the French opinion not to pose one French opinion against another, but in order that we may not nurse in our minds a feeling against any particular people or any nation. There is far more opposition
probably in France to this business than anywhere else in the world, because the sense of guilt might be greater.

As regards precautions taken about wind and weather, as I said, precautions always imply that there are dangers, and although science has advanced a great deal -- it can burst clouds and make rain; it can split atoms and what not -- we have as yet found no method of controlling the isotherms and isobars in the world which produce the movements of wind. When Mr. Jules Moch says something about the wind and that it will not move in that direction, it becomes extremely difficult to accept that position.

The uncertainty of the wind has been spoken of by American sources. On 28 January 1959 -- and I am confining myself, as far as possible, to the expressions of opinion since we last met -- The New York Times contained the following statement:

"Several specialists in the study of atomic bomb fall-out agreed yesterday that it was impossible at present to predict the drift of fall-out clouds more than a few hours in advance ... R. Robert Rapp of the Rand Corporation, in Santa Monica, California, said that fairly reliable predictions could be made for only eight hours in advance. The uncertainty, beyond that point, is not merely owing to the whims of wind change, but it is also the lack of knowledge on diffusion of particles."

When we consider that it is not a question of eight hours or eight days or eight months, but perhaps eight or eighty years during which the results can take place, and the winds may change with regard to the particles that hang around in any part of the atmosphere, any suggestion that the winds will be in favour of the exploders, or, rather, not so much against them, would not be correct.

Then the next point raised is the question of the site in the Sahara. Here I want to say, first of all, that it is not the intention of my delegation to go into any political question. We have no desire to refer to the question of sovereignty, whether the Sahara is res nullas or French territory; or even if it is French territory, whether the sovereign Power has control over undefined miles of atmosphere, stratosphere, and the sphere beyond. That is a question which future international lawyers and international agreements must settle.
But the suggestion was that the site was one which was not likely to create much of the consequences that was feared by the African populations around there. The answer to this was given by the Moroccan delegation itself. But since they are the movers of the draft resolution, I think it would be safer for us to go to some French source. In the Observer of London of 2 August, a report was carried by a Paris correspondent Mr. William Millinship. This is what he says:

"The 'atom city' built at El Hammoudia, south of Reggane, is not in the centre of a bleak desert".

Because the popular conception of the Sahara is that it is no man's land and that there is nobody there.

"The population of the Saoura Department, which includes Reggane, is close on 200,000.

"A French archaeologist, a specialist in Saharan research, informs me that the Touat and Tidikelt Valleys which converge on El Hammoudia from the north and east are among the most fertile regions of the Sahara. From Reggane to Colomb Bechar in the north an almost unbroken avenue of palm trees lines what is known as the 'date-highway'. The string of oases has been irrigated for centuries by a complex system of underground channels known as 'foggaras'. The French have sunk wells to supplement the water supplies.

"The archaeologist feels that the oases may be contaminated by fall-out from the bomb, and that radioactive substances may be carried from well to well along the subterranean waterways."

I am not suggesting that an archaeologist is an authority on radioactivity, but he certainly knows about these other matters. Mr. Jules Moch said in this matter that, not contrary to the short geography read out earlier, the sector within this range is totally uninhabited. Either the representative has been misinformed, which cannot be the case, or there is this element. We should like some clarification. Both the Moroccan delegation and all the other independent sources speak of this area as being inhabited, and, if I may so, as in the case of the Marshall Islands, it is not necessary for the particular spot of the explosion, the particular platform of the explosion, to be inhabited. If it is inhabited
within several hundred miles or thousand miles, still, it would be inhabited. But our evidence is that it is one of the richer areas of the oasis in the Sahara.

The Times of London, on 17 July 1959, wrote an article about the Sahara bomb. The British are the allies of the French. The French are seeking admission into the nuclear club, of which Britain is a recent entrant. But this is what The Times says:

"Both the Ghanaian and Liberian Governments have protested to France, and Nigeria has requested the British Government to convey its apprehensions. These protests are undoubtedly genuine. And indeed these West African States have logical cause to protest ... the West African Governments are protesting against the setting off by a foreign Power of a bomb on their borders which to their mind, apart from any harm that may be caused by radiation or fall-out, is as likely to be used against them as for their protection. Throughout Asia and Africa the bomb is a white man's weapon, used, on the only occasion when it was used, by white men against Asians."

I did not say this, The Times said it. It goes on:

"... The Sahara is large, but it is surrounded today by States which are neither part of France, nor even part of the community. What are the effects of the bomb likely to be on France's neighbours?"

Again, this last extract does not come from an Arab paper or from an Asian paper; it comes from The Times of London, with its aura of respectability.

The representative of the United Kingdom, Mr. Ormsby-Gore, speaking of this Committee, said the following:

"The United Kingdom has a very special interest in ensuring that no action which is contemplated could do harm to those peoples living in Africa who have not yet attained independence and for whose welfare my Government has a special responsibility. We have taken every step on their account as well as that of other nations to satisfy ourselves that the measures to be taken by France will ensure the safety of all concerned." (A/C.1/PV.1044, page 13)

Now what interests us is the first part, that is, that they have responsibility in regard to those populations, that precautions have become necessary because there is danger. Nobody takes precautions unless there is anticipation of danger.
But the reaction of the Nigerian State and the African States not necessarily represented here are even more important. It has been stated that:

"The following views were expressed in the Nigerian Federal House of Representatives in Lagos on 14 July 1959 by the Federal Prime Minister of Nigeria: 'That the people of Nigeria had the right to protest against the explosion of an atom bomb in the Sahara by the French Government.' The Prime Minister recollected that the House of Representatives on 24 February 1959 had clearly expressed the general feeling in Nigeria towards such a test. The text of the resolution then debated was subsequently sent to the Secretary of State by the Governor General with the request that the apprehension felt in Nigeria should be brought to the notice of the French Government."

The document goes on to state:

"The Prime Minister is most unhappy to learn from Press reports and from news bulletins that the French community at their meeting in Madagascar have proposed that the tests should be proceeded with regardless of the Nigerian protest and he hopes that the United Kingdom Government will renew their representation on the subject."

In the same assembly another Minister of the Nigerian Federal Government said:

"It appears that efforts made by the Ghana Government to stop these tests have failed, and the appeals, genuine as they were, had fallen on deaf ears. And so it becomes necessary for all other West African countries to make their feelings known in no uncertain terms and protest most strongly against these atomic tests."

The Acting Prime Minister of Nigeria, who spoke at a later date, said:

"The Northern Government is strongly opposed to the proposed atomic tests in the Sahara. We urge the French Government to use its influence and see that this dreadful proposal is not carried out."

There are many other Nigerian protests and protests from Ghana that have gone to the French Government. A group of scientists of the Nigerian University warned that in a country like Nigeria:
"... where much of the population live directly on cereals and
vegetables, the intake of radioactive material may be higher than in
countries where meat and dairy produce form the staple diet."
The Trade Union Congress of Nigeria stated:
"In the name of the working classes and on the mandate of organized
labour in Nigeria, the undersigned hereby register strongest protest against
France's determination to use the Sahara or any part of the African
continent for the purpose of conducting her atomic tests.
"In the name of Nigerian workers and in the interest of future
Franco-Nigerian relations, the workers of this country call through you, on
General de Gaulle, as President of the French Republic and head of the
Franco-African community, to use his authority to withdraw France's decision
to use his authority to withdraw France's decision to use the Sahara for
her proposed atom tests."
I hope that organized labour in the world will take notice of this strong
expression of opinion from the African workers.

From religious sources comes the following. The Christian Council of
Nigeria stated:
"Although the short-term effect on the inhabitants of Nigeria seems
likely to be negligible, the Council feels concerned for those who live
nearer wherever the venue of the test may be, and also for the long-term
effects of radioactive fall-out, particularly in countries whose main
foods are cereals and root crops."
The Roman Catholic Church of Nigeria through its Archbishop, also spoke
about the proposed test. He expressed the hope that it would be "as far removed
from human life as the American test in the Pacific and perhaps farther than
the Russian test in Siberia." But, he says, that does not matter.

I will conclude this set of quotations with another one from a French source,
because my delegation is most anxious that this issue should not become a matter
of political controversy and lead to a deterioration of relations in the African
continent. With the problems in relation to Algeria and the difficulties in the
transition of Trust Territories to independence, and with the continuance of
colonialism, mainly by Portugal, on the African continent and the remains of the
Government has the duty to ensure the protection of its country by this weapon; it was said in that context. It is said that for ten years France has desisted. That is quite true; France, with its great scientific abilities and resources has not produced the atomic bomb. That is all to their credit, but it cannot be said that in ten years the contribution made by France in the Disarmament Commission, despite Mr. Moch's great dedication, has been of a character which has not been the same as the other Western or Eastern Powers, that is to say, it has not contributed to progress until the meetings in Geneva began.
I now come to the argument that France must proclaim its determination to have no discrimination; the law must be the same for all; it must be the same for the Africans as well. If everyone is to conform to it, since France is not creating any risks for the rest of the world, nor is France creating a risk for Africa, is France, from the point of view of its own interests, right or wrong in equipping itself with nuclear weapons? This, I believe, is a matter which concerns only the French, which Frenchmen discuss among themselves, on which they alone have a right to hold different opinions -- but which is a matter that has no place in a debate of this nature.

What I am going to try to do is to restore to its true perspective a matter emotionally exaggerated by the propaganda of people making capital out of the nervous state of public opinion. I shall be as restrained as possible in my comments on this matter.

First of all, it is raised for the first time; in the history of the General Assembly a delegation has raised Article 2 (7), by implication, in regard to nuclear tests. Never has anybody contended that the United Nations is intervening in this matter just because tests were taking place in Siberia on Russian territory, or in the Pacific, which the United States has claimed is under its administration by the Trusteeship System, or in Australia, which is British territory -- none of them has argued on the basis of Article 2 (7), partly because, I suppose, of general world opinion and the recognition that the effects were not confined to the populations among whom the explosions were taking place. But, in all humility, I should like to address this set of arguments to the representative of France.

How can this question be posed on the basis of discrimination? Does France desire to be equal to all other people in all matters? Does France, with its great level of culture, with the contribution which it has made to the volume of liberty in the world, want to be equated down to the others who have not risen to that level?
Secondly, is the restriction that the General Assembly likes to see enforced in regard to what is necessary evil a discrimination? Does liberty lie in the capacity to inflict harm equally? That is the issue.

Discrimination cannot apply to these matters. It can apply to the advantages that accrue if it proceeds from racial or other circumstances. To argue on the appeal to the Assembly, on the one hand, and the protests of the African people or others -- and my delegation denies that this is particularly African business; it is everybody's business -- is not acceptable on the ground of discrimination. It is not only misplaced, it is entirely misconceived and I hope that we may pay no attention to it. There can be no question of discrimination.

That takes us to the other point: what is the purpose of this? Mr. Moch has been good enough to show the Assembly that just one little bomb is involved -- by implication, there will be no more of it. If that is so, it would not add to the atomic prowess of France from the point of view of equipment. In the power alignment of the world at present France is aligned with the United Kingdom and the United States, both of which are in possession of plentiful stocks of atomic weapons. For the defence of the frontiers of France, or even for waging colonial war in Africa, it is most unlikely that the atomic bomb would be used. Therefore, the possession of this bomb really is merely a way of finding a place in the atomic club. That is all there is to it. And if the representative of France is going to tell us that because France projects the explosion of this bomb, thereby it may have an influence on the three other atomic Powers to come to some agreement, that is a very specious argument.

Are we to suppose that France has no influence other than this on its two close allies, the United Kingdom and the United States, and, by the power which those two hold, could not exert the same pressure on the Soviet Union? Therefore, the argument put to the Assembly that it is a blessing in disguise, that if the French explode the bomb it will speed up the talks in Geneva, and that is the argument that is put forward somewhere, that if it is exploded it will be a good thing -- if we start exploding these bombs there is always a hullabaloo going on here and, therefore, the talks in Geneva will be speeded up -- that is a very specious argument to put forward: that France would have to use that kind of pressure factor as against the United States and the United Kingdom to achieve
the intimate and close alliance. And what is more, in the whole disarmament discussions, not only has France participated equally, but France -- and Mr. Moch especially -- has been the spokesman of the West.

If the argument applies to the Soviet Union, then, of course, it should be considered whether the combined capacities of the United States, on the one hand, and the United Kingdom, on the other, of the explosions which have taken place -- in the proportion, I believe, of 130 for the United States, 55 for the Soviet Union and about 23 for the United Kingdom -- should be of far more pressure than this baby bomb that is to be exploded in the Sahara.

Therefore, as far as we can, we have tried to apply to the various justifications produced by the representative of France, largely out of our respect for him and his desire to assure us that there is no ill will, no last words in the matter.

We are told that France will give up tests if all the other Powers agree to give up tests. How can it be that when the General Assembly, France itself, the world as a whole, want three Powers to give up tests, that a fourth Power should emerge? That is not a step in the direction of stopping tests.

I quote the following paragraph from Mr. Moch's statement of 4 November:

"I come finally to my conclusion. It is a repetition of my statements made in 1957 and 1958. France unanimously wishes for peace with disarmament. With enthusiasm, on the day that the first three atomic Powers renounce their nuclear armament, France will forego all military tests. Let these three Powers agree to halt, under international control, the production of fissionable materials for weapons purposes, to begin the reconversion of their stockpiles, to eliminate the vehicles for these explosives -- in short, to renounce a monopoly in fact -- and that very hour France will adopt the same measures. Seriously and solemnly I reaffirm this stand." (A/C.1/PV.1045, page 48-50)

We are grateful to the French representative for at least implying that if there was an agreement on suspension of nuclear tests, there would be no difficulty in France in acceding to it. But when we read the latter part of this paragraph it is not so clear because what is said is, we will stop these tests when production of fissional materials will be halted, stockpiles reconverted, and
the vehicles for these explosives eliminated -- that is to say when war is outlawed. It will be difficult for any country, in those circumstances, to be the law-breaker. Thus, on the one hand, one welcomes the first part and, on the other hand, the second part is a little bit of a double-edged weapon.

My delegation would not like, even by implication, to express disagreement with those who have spoken in opposition to this, but we should like to disassociate ourselves from any statement which says: if you want to explode it, why do you not explode it in France? That may be rhetoric. In so far as it is rhetoric, one does not object to it, but we stand quite clear on this matter. Whether these bombs are exploded in Siberia or in the Pacific or in Australia or in the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, or in these buildings of the United Nations, the issue is the same. The explosion anywhere is an explosion against humanity, against humanity present and of generations to come. Therefore, if, apart from the rhetorical side of it, if there is implication in this that the objection is because of the fact that it is in the Sahara, the urgency is there, but we should not like to say that if it is exploded somewhere else we do not mind. I am, however, instructed by my Government to disassociate ourselves from any idea that this particular menacing evil, this diabolical weapon, is more acceptable in one part of the world than another. In fact, perhaps to a certain extent we would have reason to be more sad if it were to be exploded, as suggested by a French newspaper, in France itself, because, apart from committing mass murder on a large scale, France would also be guilty of suicide.

Another suggestion that is made is that, instead of exploding the bomb, France could be consoled by the allies sharing their atomic secrets with France. That is a matter between them. We do not know what they share -- we know that they share a great deal, but that is a matter between those allied Powers -- but certainly it would not be a step in the right direction because what the Assembly seeks to do, what world opinion seeks to do, is to restrict and to end for good all the menacing qualities of this weapon itself and, therefore, any idea that it may be done somewhere else or that, instead of having one yourself, you may borrow someone else's -- that is no answer to this problem.

In the short time that is left I should like to say a word about this draft resolution. We have co-sponsored this draft resolution; we make no apologies in regard to this. In fact, considering the enormous amount of feeling and emotion to which Mr. Moch has rightly drawn attention, it is composed in the most restrained terms.
(Mr. Krishna Menon, India)

It is an appeal to the French Government, even at this late hour, to abandon this experiment, if it is an experiment. It is not going, in our opinion, in any way to contribute to progress of the discussions at Geneva. It is a proclamation, in terms, by a great Power, that the current may be the other way. It comes too late to be more effective than at present in the negotiations themselves. As one of the great Powers concerned with disarmament, they have all the influence they can have in the Geneva discussions.

If it is suggested that these discussions are closely confined to the three atomic Powers, then I believe the Sahara explosion, which will not take place tomorrow -- or at all, if France willed it -- will not have any great bearing, because it is our hope that these discussions at Geneva, which according to published information have already reached the stage of agreement on seventeen articles, will conclude with complete agreement. The three subjects which remain are important from the point of view of the general approach which is being made by the so-called two sides in this disarmament discussion; but one expresses the hope that progress will be made toward agreement, or, even if there is no agreement, that neither the United States nor the Soviet Union -- and I am quite sure in my own mind the United Kingdom -- will embark on any tests while these negotiations are going on.

I would like to call attention to the statement, I believe of 29 October or so, from the Russian Prime Minister to this effect:

"The Soviet Union said tonight (August 28th) that it would not conduct any nuclear weapons tests as long as the Western Powers did not resume theirs." (The New York Times, 29 August 1959)

Britain announced on 27 August that its ban on tests would go on as long as talks among the three nuclear Powers on a general suspension of tests showed some prospect of success. The United States announced on 26 August, before the General Assembly commenced this session and before the two statements I have just mentioned, that the United States would not carry out new tests of nuclear weapons for the rest of this year. The statement goes on:

"The President has directed that the unilateral suspension of nuclear weapons testing by the United States currently in effect be extended throughout the calendar year. This decision was taken in the light of the agreed six-week recess announced today by the negotiating parties at
the Geneva Conference on the discontinuance of nuclear weapons tests. ... The United States wishes to allow a reasonable period of time for the negotiations to proceed..."

But yesterday, the President of the United States further stated that it will not be the first to restart nuclear weapons tests. So that the process, if I may say so -- not with an attitude of "We told you so" -- which led to the suspension of tests, namely unilateral, voluntary action, and which when it was submitted to the Assembly was not acceptable -- it was treated with a certain amount of ridicule -- is to continue.

We also have the correspondence that has gone on between the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of the Soviet Union in order to find interim ways of agreement in regard to the discontinuance of suspension. We all know that there are arguments going on with regard to underground tests, overground tests, and so on, but all of these circumstances point to some progress being made in this matter, and one prefers to be optimistic about this. It is all the more reason, therefore, this statement coming from such a source, almost a pacifist source, being the doyen of disarmament in this Assembly and spokesman for the Western Powers, himself having suffered bereavement, as he tells us, in the wars, and having, what is more, the capacity today to call upon the nuclear Powers of our allies, it is all the more reason why, if the world embarked on this suicidal project, we cannot understand it.

My delegation refuses to believe that a country with a background of the French Republic, with its great humane traditions, would simply embark on a project of this character inimical to world peace, against the trend of world opinion and against the trend of progress being made in this matter, merely for the purpose of establishing prestige. There is no more prestige today in being in the atomic club than, I suppose, owning slaves in the twentieth century. That might have been the case two centuries ago. Therefore, no question of prestige arises. Our respect for France and her traditions, as well as for certain tendencies which we hope will come to fruition in Africa -- we dare not say any more -- will not be diminished. In fact, the prestige of France, certainly on the Continent of Africa, certainly in Japan, certainly in my own country, and in great parts of Europe which I have said nothing about, such as
the Mediterranean-European countries closely related to France, would be
affected by this explosion. There are large numbers of countries of one
nationality or another on the Mediterranean borders who cannot but be affected
by the results of this explosion, which is the explosion of a bomb, incidentally,
five times more powerful than the Hiroshima bomb. Therefore, when we talk about baby bombs, let us not forget that; this bomb which is to be exploded is
about five times the Hiroshima bomb.

Finally, my Government and my delegation would like us all to be aware of
the fact that one of the greatest misleading arguments is about the minimal
danger, as is the argument about "clean" bombs and humane killing. These
arguments are far more ominous and difficult to meet than straightforward
opposition. In any event, nobody wants to be killed humanely. It reminds me
of a cartoon I saw once saying, "I want to cut your honourable throat". So just
because the throat is called honourable, it is still cut. We therefore appeal
to the French Government -- we cannot appeal to the Government, but we express
our hope -- that the volume of opinion which will be expressed in the
world is such that if they listened and responded to it it would not be
interpreted in any quarter -- I am sure Mr. Moch wants no assurance of this --
as yielding to pressure of any kind. It would be regarded as a very noble
gesture, the response of a country of the traditions and responsibilities of
the French Republic; and particularly in view, as I have said, of the attitude
in regard to certain African problems which we hope will go in a particular
direction, it would not be interpreted in any way as an attitude of submission,
of yielding to pressure. It would be regarded as an attitude of recognition
of the feelings of people in the world. What is more, in reply to Mr. Moch's
argument that their attitude would perhaps speed the progress of discussion in
Geneva, the fact that it is announced that the project has been abandoned would
make that speeding even more speedy than otherwise.

For all these reasons, my delegation supports this resolution, not merely
just to put it to the vote and gain a large number of votes. I have not the
least doubt that the resolution will go through. But that is not enough,
because this Assembly, with all its votes, cannot stop this explosion. The vote
we require is the vote of France, and if France would vote for this resolution,
then we can all afford to abstain.
Mr. TAEIB SLIM (Tunisia) (interpretation from French): May I be permitted, to begin with, to pay tribute at this point to my colleague from Morocco and to President Jules Moch who presented the question of nuclear tests in the Sahara with all the wisdom which we know they have. The two representatives of the fraternal Governments of Morocco and France, Governments with which Tunisia has always maintained bonds of solid friendship, have not been remiss in placing the problem before us in a context and a manner commensurate with its time limits. The representative of Morocco presented to our Committee the implications of possible French nuclear tests and the position of the African States in that respect. The representative of France delineated for our benefit with numerous technical details the relative power of the French atomic bomb and the protective measures to be taken when it is exploded. For our part, we consider that this problem of nuclear tests in the Sahara has a number of facets and immediate implications which place it in two different contexts, one being African and the other international.
On the international plane, France cannot disregard the discordant note which its intentions are liable to sound in this exceptional atmosphere of the fourteenth session of the General Assembly, an atmosphere of considerable relaxation of tension and of rapprochement between the great Powers, an atmosphere apt to foster reconciliation and coexistence, which would liberate mankind from the fear of a war of global annihilation.

Mr. Moch, who for many years devoted himself to the service of the cause of disarmament, is in a better position than anybody else to realize the new hopeful prospects which this reduction of tension opens for mankind, whose future will be made secure if nations that possess these mighty means of destruction were to agree to utilize all forms of energy at their disposal for the greater good of the human community.

It is surely regrettable that our Committee, which only a few days ago managed to record exceptional unanimity on a resolution expressing the determination of the eighty-two nations represented here to see general and complete disarmament translated into reality and proclaim the necessity of focussing all efforts to that end, should today be disturbed by the discussion of a problem relating to the prospect of the explosion of an atomic bomb in the Sahara. It is regrettable that, at the very session which recommended to the ten-Power Committee which will soon meet in Geneva to study proposals made by the great Powers and observations and suggestions made by States Members of the United Nations with a view to reconverting the armaments race into a race toward the prosperity and well-being of mankind, this problem should not be settled in keeping with the spirit which has guided the deliberations of our Committee hitherto.

It is painful for us to be forced to remind one of the great Powers which has become associated in our common will for the establishment of a lasting and definitive peace to remind this great Power that it is headed down the wrong path. France cannot ignore the sustained efforts of the Geneva conference on the discontinuance of nuclear and thermonuclear weapons tests. She cannot, on the one hand, support the efforts of her Allies to reach agreement on this subject and display, on the other hand, fierce determination to carry out its own nuclear tests.
France's attitude in this respect is surprising all the more so as it appears at the very time when the atomic Powers are observing a type of truce, having agreed to a suspension of their tests until January 1960. It is even likely that the decision of the three great Powers may be continued, as it has already been once before, again in the spirit of the reduction of tension designed to contribute to the achievement of the conditions required for an immediate agreement in conformity with the provisions of resolution 1252 (XIII), which stipulates:

"Urges the parties involved in these negotiations not to undertake further testing of nuclear weapons while these negotiations are in progress."

Some may wonder whether France today is acting in the spirit of that resolution when she perseveres in her plan of exploding an atomic bomb. Would it not be the better part of wisdom for France to proclaim her decision, if not definitively to abandon her project then at least to respect the tenor of that resolution so long as the negotiations are in progress?

We were reminded yesterday of the exclusively peaceful mission which France had assigned to her scientists and technicians who were in the van of nuclear research. Is it necessary that after ten years another representative of France should let it be understood that this noble attitude has been reversed precisely at the time when we are so close to an agreement on total disarmament?

Surely France has the right to defend herself. Yesterday we heard the representative of France affirm that his country wanted to possess the atomic bomb for purposes of defence. We had always believed and we had always understood that provisions for the common defence were capable of coping with any aggression and of ensuring the Allies' security. Moreover, the French argument forfeits a good deal of its value when one bears in mind that progress in the thermonuclear and missile field has been of such nature that the atomic bomb itself can no longer be regarded as an effective means of defence. That is why we fail to see the reasons why the French Government should persevere in its plans.
(Mr. Taieb Slim, Tunisia)

To those who tell us that France, like the other great Powers, wishes to possess the atomic bomb for purposes of prestige and grandeur, we answer that France's prestige and grandeur have far more glorious foundations not measured, as far as we are concerned, by the possession of technical devices for mass destruction. By focussing her efforts on research in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, France would maintain the respect due to her. We are persuaded that progress and research in this field would enable France to contribute appreciably to the economic and social development of insufficiently developed countries and to international prosperity at large.

The emotion felt throughout the world owing to the prospect of French nuclear explosions in the Sahara has been eloquently emphasized by preceding speakers. Our friends from Asia have in particular felt the same anxiety as the peoples of Africa, who do not hide their fear when confronted with possible dangers to be incurred by them as a result of the French atomic bomb explosion. Some Mediterranean countries have also expressed their concern and apprehension. In France itself, voices opposing this plan have been heard. The Independent Socialist Party adopted a motion at its Congress last May in which it "protested vigourously against the project of developing a French atomic bomb", and it described the proposed test as "costly, dangerous and useless".

As for the peoples of Africa, they have repeatedly expressed their disapproval of the proposed test. The representatives of the independent States of Africa, gathered at a conference in Accra in April 1958 and in Monrovia in August 1959, vigorously denounced the proposed nuclear tests in the Sahara.

The attitude of my country on this subject is well known. In his speech before the General Assembly, our Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs re-emphasized it in stating:

"My Government has made two solemn representations to the Government of the French Republic to communicate to the latter its grave concern and in order to induce it to renounce its prospective tests in the African Sahara. It is regrettable to note that the French Government did not deem it necessary to take my Government's representations into consideration, as well as the representations made in the same sense by other African States."
And he added:

"My Government vigorously protests essentially against the choice of the African Sahara as the place of the explosion scheduled by the French Government, and it does so in full agreement with all the other African States, being aware of expressing the anxiety of all the African peoples."
The other African States which are still dependent and the members of the French Community have likewise voiced their grave concern at the plans of the French Government. Is there any need here to recall the declaration made by one of the heads of government of one state of the Community in an interview granted to the newspaper Le Monde on 7 September, last:

"The prospect of French atomic tests likewise causes us a great deal of anxiety."

and he added:

"I have already brought my opinion to the attention of the responsible parties."

The same newspaper Le Monde, published in September 1959 a clarification by the permanent delegations of the Mali Government stating that the Mali Federation has never given its consent to a nuclear test in the African Sahara.

The representative of Ghana and the other African representatives have furnished to us in their speeches ample details on the responses of the peoples and Governments of Africa, which have already been brought to the attention of the French Government. The French Government has not felt itself obliged to give a satisfactory reply to these notes, nor did it think it necessary to take account of the repeated appeals of African public opinion.

The representative of the United Kingdom, in his address yesterday, did not hide the apprehensions felt by the Government of Nigeria and the feelings of the people of that great African country.

We have expressed the anxiety of all the African peoples which are faced with the danger of the explosion of this bomb in the Sahara and we have repeated that Africa today protests against this bomb which they wish to throw into the midst of the Sahara.

The representative of France offers us a brilliant defence based upon comparisons with the effects of the other bombs, American, Russian or British, upon the populations bordering the points of explosion. He knows, however, that the danger exists, no matter how small it may be. If we protest vigorously against the tests to take place in the Sahara, it is because France, unlike the other three great Powers, intends to explode its bomb in our homeland, Africa.
The representative of Morocco has recalled that the demarcation of boundaries in the African Sahara is far from being precise and definitive. For my part, I shall limit myself to adding that this has been the subject of serious claims and counterclaims, especially on the part of Tunisia and Morocco.

It is important to note here that, by its decision to explode an atomic bomb, France has given expression to a new approach to her system of defence -- defence by atomic weapons. This bomb therefore constitutes a starting point; it marks the beginning of a whole series of other similar tests; it is the inauguration of a whole programme. One may well wonder whether France is thus seeking to throw itself into a nuclear competition fraught with grave consequences which may give rise to new disturbances. For experience has shown us that the explosion of an atomic bomb is of no interest, from the military point of view, except to the extent that it prepares for the explosion of other more and more powerful bombs which themselves open up new perspectives for nuclear and thermonuclear tests of the H-bomb type. We may well be permitted to wonder whether the case of the French tests will be in any way different.

At a time when Africa is stirring itself to forge its new destiny, a time when new prospects of co-operation and friendship among peoples are opening up, transforming the bonds of the era of colonial domination into new bonds of association based upon fruitful co-operation and mutual comprehension, it is at least saddening that France, by its decision, is risking the alienation of the friendship of the African peoples and allowing its relationship with the new Africa to be overshadowed with doubt and anguish.

The representative of France himself in his address alluded to this point, asking, as we are asking, whether France consents to the loss of the friendship of the peoples of Africa. We cannot believe France does so consent. France could not remain deaf to the appeal which the peoples of Africa are unanimous in voicing for France to give up the plan to explode a bomb in the heart of Africa.

My delegation has co-sponsored a draft resolution which has been presented to this Committee for its consideration. I reserve the right of my delegation to speak again in this debate at the time the draft resolution is taken up.
Mr. VIDIC (Yugoslavia): The question of the French nuclear tests in the Sahara which we are considering at present is, in the view of my delegation, a very important one. This question cannot, in the opinion of my delegation, be separated from the broader problem of the suspension of all atomic and hydrogen weapon tests. However, an effort at precisely such a separation has been made here by the representative of the French Republic, Mr. Jules Moch. First of all, he is trying to convince us that the national interests of France make it imperative for the French Government to become an atomic power, in view of the fact that an agreement on cessation of the production of atomic and hydrogen weapons and on control measures relating thereto has been achieved so far; and secondly, he tries to persuade us that the fact of the negotiations now taking place in Geneva among the representatives of the three existing nuclear Powers is not essential and cannot affect France's determination to carry out the planned tests, as these negotiations are not concerned with the question of the cessation of the production of nuclear weapons.

Proceeding from this, the representative of France has made every effort to convince us that the announced tests in the Sahara do not constitute a danger for anyone, that the radiation effects of the bomb which is to be exploded are small, and that all possible preventive measures have been undertaken with regard to the choosing of favourable weather conditions, favourable winds, the physical control of tests, and so on. He warned us further that France had already lost nine precious years without carrying out any tests, while the other three nuclear Powers have resorted to such tests.

For all these reasons Mr. Jules Moch requests from us only one thing: that is, to understand and approve all this, or at least not to obstruct the carrying-out of French nuclear tests in the Sahara. In this connexion an attempt has also been made to place all of us in the contradictory position of opposing French tests because they are French, implying thereby to a certain extent that we have not been opposed -- so vigorously, at least -- to the nuclear weapons tests carried out by the United States of America, the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom, or at least implying an admission on our part that the tests carried out by the three aforementioned Powers cannot have harmful consequences to life on earth, although a number of tests have been carried out not only with atomic but also with hydrogen weapons.
No matter how logical and convincing all this may sound to some, I deem it necessary to state that the whole question, because of its serious character, makes it incumbent upon us to grasp first of all the situation in which we find ourselves today as mankind, as citizens of the world, so to speak, and also to realize our position as responsible Members of the United Nations whose final task is to promote and consolidate the foundations of peace and international stability.
In the light of this we believe that France's intention to proceed with atomic weapons tests bodes no good for the future of the solving of the problem of disarmament, which is a general problem affecting all of us here, and indeed all men and women in the world.

It is well known that my Government is opposed to the undertaking of atomic and hydrogen weapons tests, and also that it has consistently opposed such tests in the past. There is no necessity to quote any examples in this respect, although these examples could, I believe, be eloquent and unambiguous. We share this stand with the huge majority of countries and peoples who are seriously concerned about the future of peace in the world and about the fate of present and future generations.

In this respect we make no distinction between the possible French tests and the tests which have been carried out so far. We are opposing, together with many other delegations, the French tests, both for reasons of principle and for reasons arising out of the concrete requirements of the international situation.

No matter how consoling the data produced with regard to the radioactive fall-out resulting from the French test may sound, the fact remains nevertheless that this test will constitute a serious danger for the peoples of the area where it is to take place, and not only for them. It is also a fact that the test is not to take place on French territory, although we would equally oppose tests carried out on French soil, for the reasons that I have just mentioned. I speak about French "territory" in the broader sense of the word. Therefore, the concern manifested by the countries of the African continent with regard to these tests is fully justified and understandable and must be taken into account.

Let us assume that all that Mr. Noch has said about the allegedly minimum danger involved in the French tests is correct. Even if it were so, however, both the intention and the logic of the explanation given by him cannot withstand criticism under the conditions of the present situation in the field of disarmament and in that of international relations in general.
Let us merely reflect upon the present condition of the general armaments race, and particularly upon the efforts which are being invested on various sides to stop this race and to establish thereby foundations for a world where genuine peace as well as general peaceful co-operation among nations will prevail. It has been stated here that the three nuclear Powers were prompted by special reasons for engaging in negotiations on the suspension of atomic and hydrogen weapons tests. Concurrently with this, emphasis has been laid on the continuation of the production of atomic and hydrogen weapons on the part of these Powers, even if an agreement on the prohibition of tests is reached.

We agree -- and we have always believed -- that it is absolutely necessary to discontinue the production of atomic and hydrogen weapons as soon as possible, to eliminate the existing stockpiles of such weapons and to use atomic energy exclusively for peaceful purposes. But precisely for these reasons, precisely from the viewpoint of implementing this aim, it would be wrong to underestimate the negotiations which are now taking place between the three nuclear Powers. Regardless of the "special motives" which have prompted these Powers to start negotiations, we are faced with the extremely important fact that a moratorium in the field of nuclear weapons tests has been achieved and is being maintained even without a formal agreement. The significance of this fact cannot be contested either from the standpoint of the reduction of the danger of radioactivity or from that of the opening of better prospects for successful disarmament talks in general, and particularly for progress in the field of disarmament. The majority of delegations of the Member States of the United Nations, including the representatives of the three nuclear Powers, have repeatedly admitted and pointed out here that an agreement on the lasting cessation of atomic and nuclear weapons tests would play a tremendous positive role, making it easier to undertake the successful solution of various further aspects of the problem of disarmament.

I wish to emphasize here that we should give credit to the nuclear Powers for the sense of responsibility towards world public opinion which they have manifested by starting their negotiations and by exerting positive efforts with
a view to realising a rapprochement as regards their views. We should not forget for a single moment that ordinary men and women all over the world are vitally interested in the work and efforts of statesmen in the field of disarmament and that they naturally rejoice whenever progress in this direction is realised. Actually, they have waited too long for a positive turning-point in this respect, a trend which is now appearing on the horizon and which should, for this very reason, be assisted and supported, precisely at the present moment, by all the means at our disposal and by common effort.

Consequently, I feel that the practical effect of the French intention to undertake atomic weapons tests would dangerously impair the existing moratorium and seriously endanger the reaching of agreement on the lasting, controlled suspension of atomic and hydrogen weapons tests. It is, therefore, normal and absolutely necessary to appeal to the French representatives here, and to the French Government, to refrain from the carrying out of their intention, so as not to impair the positive developments which are now taking place and in which the peoples of the world lay so much hope.

In the concrete context, Mr. Moch's statement to the effect that each Government has the right and duty to undertake -- in the absence of an agreement on the cessation of production of atomic and hydrogen weapons -- measures aimed at ensuring its national interests opens the door to the continuation of the race in atomic armaments and, in actual fact, would result in the continuation, broadening and intensification of this race. In the name of a struggle against the atomic monopoly, it could plunge the world into an atomic chaos precisely at the moment when it appears that it is possible to find a way for bringing to an end the atomic monopoly of the existing nuclear Powers by agreement, through common efforts in the field of disarmament. France would have its atomic bomb today, but what would the near future have in store for us?
I wish to make my point perfectly clear. I repeat that the Yugoslav Government is energetically and without reservations in favour of the suspension of the production of atomic and hydrogen weapons, of the elimination of stockpiles of these weapons, of the exclusive use of atomic energy for peaceful purposes, accompanied by appropriate measures of international control and inspection. At the present moment, however, the implementation of this aim may only be rendered more difficult by the resumption of nuclear tests by any side. We are not opposed to the announced French tests because they are French, but because we are generally opposed to the resumption of nuclear weapons tests, because we are in favour of the total prohibition of these tests in the interests of peace and the safety of present and future generations.

Only a few days ago, we unanimously adopted the resolution on the impending resumption of disarmament talks between the great Powers in the committee of ten as well as in the Disarmament Commission of the United Nations. We are convinced that this process will be promoted and facilitated by meetings of leading statesmen from the various regions of the world, by summit conferences and by other efforts exerted on a bilateral or multilateral basis.

The time has now come to promote from all sides, and even more energetically, the creation of conditions conducive to genuine and active coexistence among all countries, irrespective of the existing differences in their social and political systems and their different degrees of development. This is one more reason why we should avoid undertaking anything that could impede such a development in the world, which is yearning for peace, security and fruitful international co-operation.

In concluding my statement, I wish to add the following: We failed to be impressed by the attempt to placate the conscience of Member States by submitting consoling data on the low radioactivity of the French atomic bomb -- by fostering, in the name of understanding, developments fraught with the most serious and far-reaching danger. At the same time, it must not be disregarded that the decision to undertake nuclear tests in the Sahara may have, and probably will have, adverse effects upon the relations between the independent countries and peoples of Africa, on the one hand, and France, on the other. Also, we should not fail to
mention the fact that the tests are to be carried out on a territory whose population is not of French nationality and has not been consulted concerning the risks which are being imposed upon it. It is quite as obvious that France is unable to provide any guarantee that the effects of this test, as well as of possible future tests, will not be felt even outside the borders of the African continent, in the region of the Mediterranean and in Central Europe.

France, whose people have traditionally enjoyed our sincere sympathy in Yugoslavia, should understand the feeling of concern which has been aroused all over the world by its announced decision to undertake atomic weapons tests. We are profoundly convinced that France should desist from such action and should simultaneously co-operate with many other nations in the search for and devising of genuine methods leading toward complete nuclear and other disarmament as well as toward peace, which would be consolidated on that basis. France has many possibilities and opportunities to act in this manner in the coming period. In this connexion, I am in complete agreement with both the manner of presentation and the well-founded arguments of the representative of India, Mr. Krishna Menon, when he appealed to France to desist from the intended tests.

For all these reasons, my delegation will vote in favour of the draft resolution on the question of French nuclear tests in the Sahara submitted by a group of Asian and African countries.

The CHAIRMAN: The representative of Portugal has asked for the floor to exercise his right of reply, and I recognize him now.

Mr. GARIN (Portugal): I was not in this room when the representative of India made a statement concerning my country. The statement was reported to me and, although its purposes are not clear to my delegation, I am confident that the Chairman will agree with me that it was entirely irrelevant and outside the scope of our present debate.

The CHAIRMAN: I now recognize the representative of France, who wishes to exercise his right of reply.
Mr. MOCCH (France) (interpretation from French): I would not wish my silence to be interpreted as consent to what I have just heard. The representative of Tunisia, Mr. Taieb Slim, used the imperfect tense in speaking of my long effort in behalf of disarmament. I would request him, almost as a friendly service, to put that in the present tense. I can assure him that I shall persevere in my efforts, since I am convinced that in these days they are just about the only efforts worth making in the uncertain and troubled world in which we live. Nor should it astonish anyone if I say that the coming French test may hasten a general agreement on disarmament and its nuclear aspect by demonstrating the fragility of monopolies based on ephemeral secrets, because it will be perfectly clear, as it has been for some time, that it is impossible to keep Prometheus chained for too long.

May I also tell our Yugoslav colleague that he may have distorted some thoughts when he said that France could give no guarantees. He knows what personal sympathies I have for his country's efforts, and I do not want any clouds to darken the relations between us. But may I assure him that our precautions and guarantees and safeguards will be as careful and conscientious as were the efforts in France to save his country's scientists, who were the first to become the victims of a serious laboratory accident and to absorb large amounts of radiation.
I would have many things to say to answer some speakers. There are some erroneous interpretations which would have to be brought out, as there are some confused thoughts that would have to be clarified. But I intend to do this en bloc at the end of the debate in so far as I have already not done so in advance in my initial speech, whose essential content data have, in my opinion, scarcely been adequately answered or mentioned by many of the speakers. There is hardly any need for me to express my disagreement with many of the words spoken, but I should like to thank many speakers for the courtesy which they displayed even when they criticized my country's policy in a manner which was painful to me.

Mr. Taieb SLIM (Tunisia) (interpretation from French): The name of the representative of Tunisia was just pronounced by our friend, Mr. Jules Moch, and I should like to answer forthwith.

I should like to say that I am fully convinced that Mr. Moch will persevere in his efforts for total and complete disarmament, not only in the present tense but also we could use the future tense here. But I am also sure that Mr. Moch is aware of our profound anxiety, the profound anxiety felt by all of us when faced by this grievous matter.

The CHAIRMAN: There is no speaker inscribed for this afternoon. I had hoped that we could make full use of the remaining time at our disposal.

However, since there are no speakers, I shall have to cancel this afternoon's meeting unless of course some representatives are prepared to intervene then.

The next meeting will be held at 10:30 a.m. Monday morning. Fortunately, we have a full list of speakers for two meetings.

The meeting rose at 12:45 p.m.