Thirteenth Session
FIRST COMMITTEE
VERBATIM RECORD OF THE NINE HUNDRED AND FORTY-SEVENTH MEETING
Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 13 October 1958, at 3 p.m.

Chairman:
Mr. URQUIA  (El Salvador)

1. Question of disarmament (continued)
2. The discontinuance of atomic and hydrogen weapons tests (continued)
3. The reduction of the military budgets of the USSR, the United States, the United Kingdom and France by 10 - 15 per cent and the use of part of the savings so effected for assistance to the under-developed countries (continued)

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AGENDA ITEMS 64, 70 and 72

1. QUESTION OF DISARMAMENT (continued)

2. THE DISCONTINUANCE OF ATOMIC AND HYDROGEN WEAPONS TESTS (continued)


Mr. ZORIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (interpretation from Russian): On instructions from the Government of the USSR, the Soviet Union delegation has presented to the current session of the General Assembly a proposal on the reduction of the military budgets of the USSR, the United States, the United Kingdom and France by 10-15 per cent and the use of part of the savings so effected for assistance to the under-developed countries.

The military budgets of States, which, during the post-war years, have grown to a fantastic degree, are a striking expression of the armaments race which besets the world and which is fraught with the greatest danger to peace. The armaments race, the rival accumulation of the most modern means of mass extermination of human beings, which become more dangerous and death dealing with every year that passes, introduces into relations between States dread, fear and suspicion, hostility and tension, and brings closer the danger of atomic war. On the other hand, the inflated military budgets lead to the squandering of national resources and bring misfortune and suffering to the peoples who carry the heavy economic burden.

The armaments race which began after the Second World War is intensifying from year to year. While in 1929, during the temporary breathing spell between two world wars, the military expenditures of all countries constituted a total of $4.2 billion, this year -- thirteen years after the end of the Second World War -- these expenditures exceed $100 billion; and out of this, the states members of NATO spend more than $60 billion. The world is spending a colossal sum on armaments, a sum which is equal in value to all the commodities that circulate in international trade. According to the most conservative estimates covering the period of more than two score years from 1914 through 1954 -- that is, during the life of one
generation -- wars and military preparations absorbed no less than $2.5 trillion; that is, $2.5 million million. What unimagined peaks of progress and development could have been attained by mankind if these resources had been spent for constructive purposes.

The armaments race is the main cause of the sharp increase of the burden of taxation, inflationary rises in prices and devaluation of currencies. It leads inevitably to a reduction of earnings, the ruination of peasants and artisans, a reduction in the incomes of small and middle size businesses, and even of the entrepreneurs. Even the large-scale industrialists who engage in the production of goods for civilian consumption cannot avoid the consequences of the armaments race.
For the broad strata of the population the increasing rise of taxation, direct and indirect, is particularly painful. For example, between 1952 and 1957, the United States collected from the population $373 billion dollars worth of taxes, while during the 156 years which began with the administration of President Washington, to the Government of Franklin Delano Roosevelt inclusive, the aggregate sum of taxes collected constituted only $244 billion. In other words, over the past five years one and a half times as much taxes was collected from the people than during the 156 years of the existence of the United States until 1945.

Who inspires this unreasonable armaments race? Whom does it benefit? As far as the popular masses are concerned, the armaments race yields nothing but sorrow, privation and fear. Profits are collected from the armaments race only by a small group of people, the large monopolists, and for whom war and the armaments race are the most profitable business of all, a source of enrichment. The facts indicate that the profits of the monopolies are growing pari passu with the armaments race. For example, the General Dynamics Company, which produces ballistic rockets, atomic submarines, military aircraft and other military equipment, has increased its annual profits in ten years from 1.8 to 91.8 million dollars, to say nothing of such super-monopolies as General Motors which in 1957 collected about $950 million clear profit.

In the Soviet Union there are no monopolies that would rake in riches from the production of weapons. All the Soviet peoples are profoundly interested in lasting peace and tranquillity. War propaganda is regarded as a crime in my country. It is punishable by law. Over all post-war years the Soviet Union has conducted a stubborn and consistent struggle for the cessation of the sinister armaments race, considering as it does that its swift cessation would be an invaluable boon to mankind because it would relieve it of the danger of a world conflagration and at the same time emancipate it from this insufferable economic burden.

Up to now we have been proposing the direct way, the direct reduction of armed forces and armaments. But this approach, unfortunately, has not so far yielded practical results owing to the position of the Western Powers. Now we propose another possible way of solving this question, to wit, the reduction of the military budgets of the United States, the USSR, the United Kingdom and France,
the Powers which possess the largest armed forces and expend the largest sums for military purposes. In making this proposal we have in mind the fact that at one time the representative of the United States voiced the idea that it was necessary and possible to reduce military budgets by 10 per cent.

The representative of the United States in the Disarmament Sub-Committee, Mr. Harold Stassen, told the meeting of the Sub-Committee in London, on 16 March 1957, the following:

"I ask the question: could we set as a target that each State in its first step should bring its military expenditure down by 10 per cent?"

Taking this statement into account, we wish to express the hope that the United States delegation will support the Soviet proposal for the reduction of the military budgets of the four above-mentioned countries. What fruit would the peoples reap from a reduction of military budgets? The cessation of the armaments race, the reduction of the military expenditures of States, would open truly colossal possibilities of increasing the productive sources and raising the standard of well-being of the peoples. It would have the most beneficent influence on the whole international situation. The cessation of the armaments race, the reallocation of resources now expended for armaments, the carrying out of tasks of peaceful construction, would liberate vast productive might, tremendous quantities of raw material and likewise tremendous human resources.

The resources liberated as a result of the reduction of military expenditures would make it possible substantially to reduce taxes and thus raise the purchasing capacity and the standard of living of the population. The reduction of military appropriations would make it possible to expand and encourage the construction of schools, hospitals, residential buildings and highways, and would increase appropriations for social insurance, and finance a number of other measures which would lead to the development of the economy, to the increase of the level of rational education and the well-being of the population. It is well known what influence foreign trade has on the economies of a number of countries. There is no doubt that the reduction of military expenditures would make it possible considerably to improve the balance of trade of these countries.
It is natural that the Socialist countries would likewise gain from the cessation of the armaments race. A further reduction of military expenditures would enable the Soviet to expand with even greater speed all the branches of the people's economy, including light industry, to expedite housing construction and thus solve our housing problem in the shortest possible time. Some may ask: Will not the reduction of military production lead to economic difficulties and unemployment? This is an argument which is used in particular by the champions of the armaments race and of the cold war. They argue that mass production of weapons and military equipment sustain business activities, stimulates the development of the economy, and increases levels of employment. They try to scare the working class by telling them that if the cold war were discontinued, if the need of an armaments race were to drop out, this would give rise to a reduction or a contraction in levels of production, to an increase the army of unemployed and the lowering of the standard of living of the toilers.

However, unquestionable facts demonstrate that the militarization of the economy does not save anyone from periodic crisis of over-production. The most militarized country, the United States of America, can serve as a striking example in this respect. Did the increase of military expenditures after the Second World War save America from the over-production crisis? No, it did not, even though military expenditures, which slightly exceeded one billion dollars in the year before the Second World War, were gradually increased to $45 billion this year. The United States, after the war, was subjected to harsher blows of economic contraction than other capitalist countries.
This happened in 1948-49, in 1953-54 and in 1957-58. The last recession has been the hardest one. Between December 1956 and April 1958 American industrial production, as is well known, dropped by about 15 per cent, and the American economy is today undergoing a serious recession. The number of those totally unemployed, to say nothing of millions who are partially unemployed, continues to hover around the five million mark.

The higher the level of the militarization of the economy of any State, the swifter will be its fall to the bottom in a crash. Right now, all sound economists have been constrained to acknowledge that economic development plans based on an arms race have suffered utter failure and that the exit from the labyrinth of economic difficulties which beset capitalist countries must be sought not through the intensification of the arms race but by expanding the economy peacefully and by the broad expansion of international economic ties. Of course, the cessation of the arms race cannot put an end to the basic contradictions in capitalism which give rise to cyclical rises in the economy and crashes and unemployment and recession. However, it is quite clear that the cessation of the unproductive expenditures which are squandered in the construction of weapons of death and destruction would have the most beneficial effect on the character and trends of all productive forces. The reduction of military expenditures would lead to a reduction of the burden of taxation, especially as regards indirect taxes on consumer goods, to an expanded demand for the products of the peaceful branches of economy, to a cessation in the rise of prices and then to their eventual lowering.

During recent years the Soviet Union has unilaterally and consistently reduced its defence expenditures. In 1955 Soviet defence expenditures were 112.1 billion rubles. In 1956 they were cut down to 102.5 billion rubles. In 1957 it was cut down to 96.7 billion rubles. In 1958 it was cut to 96.3 billion rubles. Thus, from 1955 to the present, Soviet defence expenditures have been cut by a total of 15.8 billion rubles. Concurrently, the effectives of the Soviet armed forces have been cut substantially by more than two million men.

These unilateral efforts of the Soviet Union, prompted by its desire to contribute to a relaxation of international tension and to foster a universal cessation of the arms race, far from bringing in their wake a lowering of the
pace of economic development, have in fact contributed to the expansion of the production of industry and agriculture. As is well known, in our country measures have recently been carried out which are designed to improve the situation of the population at large, measures such as increasing the pay levels of workers in the lowest paid categories, the increasing of pensions, reduction of the work week and reduction of agricultural taxation, and so on. All demobilized servicemen are given work according to their training and specialities.

The reduction of armed forces and military expenditures which have been carried out over the past few years in other socialist countries have likewise contributed to increasing productivity and to raising the standard of living of the people of these countries.

The reduction of the military budgets of the United States, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union and France would make it possible to shunt part of the resources thus saved to extending economic assistance to under-developed countries. The aggravation of international tension and the armaments race have done great harm to the economies of the under-developed countries which have not yet been placed on a sound foundation. The military expenditures constitute a burden which weighs down on the economies of under-developed countries, lowers their standard of living even further and imposes great difficulty in the carrying out of their economic development plans. At the same time these countries are in desperate need of resources for economic development, for the liquidation of the centuries-old poverty and misery of hundreds of millions of human beings. More than half the population of the world lives in the under-developed countries. However, these countries' share in world industrial production is wholly insignificant, no more than 4 to 7 per cent in the principal branches of industrial production. The industrial backwardness of economically under-developed countries is characterized mainly by the utter lack of mechanization and the extremely low productivity of labour. The technical equipment of industry, agriculture and transport in under-developed countries per individual worker is twenty times lower than in the economically developed countries. The under-developed countries depend to a considerable degree on the export of raw material and agricultural products and on the importation of industrial goods, especially industrial equipment.
It is clear that the economic advancement of the under-developed countries can and must in fact be achieved in the first instance by the efforts of the peoples of the countries involved. However, the scale of this task, which presupposes a substantial expansion of the productive potential of these countries in relatively short intervals of time, historically speaking, is so large that it requires organized assistance on the part of the countries which are industrially developed and which possess the necessary equipment, resources and technical experience as well. Some assistance of this type has already been extended to the under-developed countries on the basis of bilateral and multilateral agreements and under the Technical Assistance Programmes of the United Nations. However, we must acknowledge that such assistance has been wholly inadequate so far.

Proceeding from these premises, the Soviet Union proposed that a portion of the resources made available as a result of the reduction of military expenditures in the budgets of the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and France should be made available by these countries to economically under-developed countries for their economic development. We do not intend here to prejudge the procedure for making such assistance available. However, the aspect of principle involved in this matter is clear: the extension of such assistance should be carried out without any military, political or other conditions attached which would impair the sovereignty of States which receive such assistance, without in any way impairing, in other words, their rights or interests. The reduction of the military expenditures of these four Powers would make it possible to make available billions of dollars, and it would make it possible also to allocate large sums for the needs of economic development of under-developed countries. If a decision were adopted to reduce military budgets of the four Powers by 15 per cent, no less than 10 to 12 billion dollars per year would be made available.
If out of this sum 10 per cent were allocated for assistance to the under-developed countries, this would make more than one billion dollars available. These resources would assist the under-developed countries in carrying out a large-scale programme of industrial construction and the reorganization of agriculture on a modern foundation. By means of these resources, hundreds of factories and plants could be built in the under-developed countries, as well as hundreds of dams and irrigation facilities. What is now desert would bloom. The material and cultural level of millions of human beings inhabiting countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America would rise substantially.

The adoption and implementation of the Soviet proposal for a 10-15 per cent reduction in military budgets and the allocation of the savings so effected for assistance to the under-developed countries would open the door not only to the relaxation of international tension and an end to the cold war and the armaments race, but it would be a tremendous stimulus for the future sound development of the world's productive resources and the raising of the standard of living of peoples. It would enable science and human culture to flourish.

The Soviet Union for its part is prepared to reduce its military budget by this ratio provided that the other Powers act in the same way. In that event, the Soviet Union is prepared to allocate the appropriate resources for extending assistance to the under-developed countries. The Soviet delegation considers that there are and can be no objective obstacles which could hamper the swift carrying out of this important measure, which would be conducive to a cessation of the armaments race, since all that is needed is the desire and the goodwill to reach an agreement.

With regard to the institution of controls over this reduction in military expenditures by the four countries, the Soviet Union, the United States, the United Kingdom and France, difficulties are unlikely to arise. As is well known, in previous proposals on the question of disarmament, the Soviet Union has provided suitable measures of control over the reduction of military budgets. If the parties concerned display the necessary goodwill to achieve an agreement, then agreement on the necessary details can be reached in a short time. It is necessary to note the circumstance that decisions on the reduction of military appropriations are taken by the supreme legislative organs of the States concerned,
and this would surely provide the necessary safeguards and guarantees that these decisions would be carried out without let or hindrance.

In order to facilitate the reaching of an agreement, the Soviet Government proposes that the question of the reduction of military budgets of States should be considered as an independent measure without making its solution dependent upon the carrying out of other aspects of the disarmament problem, that is, dependent upon whether or not it is possible to reach agreement on other aspects of disarmament. We proceed from the premise that the tying in of the question of the reduction of military budgets with other disarmament questions can only hamper, as it has in fact done before, the taking of any decision on even this relatively uncomplicated question.

The general debate which has taken place in the General Assembly has shown that the idea of reducing military budgets and using a part of the savings so effected for assistance to the under-developed countries has commanded the approval and support of a host of delegations, especially the delegations from the under-developed countries. The Soviet delegation wishes to express the hope that the General Assembly will examine this proposal most carefully and that it will take a favourable decision upon it.

In view of the fact that the representative of the United States today offered some clarification of the draft resolution on disarmament presented by the United States and certain other delegations, the Soviet delegation for its part would like to make some preliminary observations with regard to that draft resolution.

Everyone of us is interested, first and foremost, in the kind of solution which is proposed in this draft resolution in respect of the principle and most urgent problem, that of discontinuing the tests of nuclear weapons. We do not see in the United States draft resolution the main point with regard to this. There is no appeal to the Powers that conduct atomic and hydrogen weapons tests to halt these tests immediately and unconditionally, and thus put an end once and for all to the dangerous competition in further increasing the destructive power of existing weapons and in developing new types of nuclear weapons. Instead of this, the United States draft resolution contains the good intention or wish that countries which will participate in the forthcoming negotiations in Geneva will make "every effort to reach early agreement on the suspension of nuclear weapons tests". It is worth noting, first of all, that the question is
not one of the cessation of tests, but only of their suspension. This wording in itself reveals the plans of the authors of the United States draft resolution to confine themselves to the suspension of tests for a definite period of time, and not for ever, as demanded by public opinion.

For what period of time is it proposed that the tests be discontinued? On this score, the United States draft resolution urges the Powers which will be involved in the negotiations on the cessation of tests in Geneva "not to undertake further testing of nuclear weapons while these negotiations are in progress". Therefore, in the event that, through the fault of the Western Powers themselves, which are not interested in reaching such an agreement, the Geneva negotiations were to run into a deadlock or were to be broken off without resulting in any agreement, then the States conducting nuclear weapons tests would have complete freedom of action to continue further hydrogen and atomic weapons tests. This shows that the sponsors of the draft resolution are seeking to prevent the General Assembly from speaking out in favour of the proposal to discontinue nuclear weapons tests for ever and without any restrictive conditions. That is why in the draft resolution everything is reduced solely to an appeal that tests be temporarily suspended.

By acting in such a way, the sponsors of the United States draft resolution appear in the role of opponents of an immediate and unconditional cessation of atomic and hydrogen weapons tests. They seek to reduce the role of the General Assembly in this important initial step to the adoption of an empty resolution which would be barren of content. Such a resolution would not commit anybody to anything and its adoption would not advance the solution of the question of the cessation of nuclear weapons tests or of the disarmament problem as a whole by one single step.
Meanwhile, the General Assembly is in a position to render substantial assistance in obtaining success at the Geneva talks by clearly and unequivocally speaking out in favour of the unconditional cessation of nuclear tests.

Paragraph 4, and some other paragraphs of the draft resolution, persistently emphasize that the General Assembly should speak in favour of "the technical approach" to the solution of the disarmament problem. The vague phraseology favouring such an approach conceals the rather clear tendency of the United States and other Western Powers to transfer all discussions of questions relating to disarmament from the political level to the technical level, that is to supplant the discussion of the essence of questions relating to disarmament by the discussion of questions relating to the technique of control. In other words, instead of working out agreed technical measures on the reduction of armaments and the prohibition of atomic weapons, it is proposed to discuss questions relating to the technique of control over the implementation of measures which not only are not being carried out but with regard to which no agreement has yet been achieved.

It goes without saying that one cannot accept this technical approach if one bears in mind a goal such as the solution of the principal disarmament questions in substance and not the intention to drown this matter in endless technical disputes as happened, for example, in the League of Nations, where the Western Powers succeeded in driving the disarmament problem into a labyrinth of technical committees and burying it there. The sponsors of the proposed draft resolution invite us to follow the same path.

Suffice it to recall in this connexion that, after the Geneva conference of experts, in the course of which the experts of the Western Powers repeatedly stated that their task consisted only in studying the technical aspects of control and not in solving the question of the cessation of tests itself and that the adoption of a decision in substance was only possible in negotiations at a Governmental level, the Governments of the United States and the United Kingdom are again evading the adoption of decisions on the substance of this question. It now becomes increasingly clear that the Governments of the United States and the United Kingdom are trying to turn the forthcoming Geneva
conference into a new conference for the study of technical questions of control, thus shelving the adoption of a decision on the immediate and unconditional cessation of tests. The attempts of the United States and the United Kingdom push the United Nations on to the path of continuous conferences of technical experts under the guise of a so-called non-political technical approach are in fact attempts to evade the solution of specific disarmament questions in substance and attempts to mislead public opinion by references to some kind of activity in the field of disarmament while in fact there is no solution of the actual questions.

Such a policy in the field of disarmament condemns us to marking time endlessly and runs counter to the interests of the peoples who demand that the armaments race be stopped and that at least partial but real measures in the field of disarmament be carried out.

For these reasons alone, the United States draft resolution cannot serve as a basis for a General Assembly decision which would really advance the solution of the urgent problems of disarmament, first of all of achieving agreement on the immediate and unconditional cessation of nuclear weapons tests by all powers for all time. The United States proposal could only be harmful because it would constitute a serious handicap for the forthcoming Geneva conference on the cessation of nuclear weapons tests.

The delegation of the Soviet Union considers that the General Assembly has no right to relieve itself of its responsibilities. It should clearly and unequivocally support a proposal for the immediate and unconditional cessation of nuclear weapons tests by all Powers. The draft resolution submitted by the Soviet Union answers this need. The adoption by the General Assembly of such a decision would be of great help and would contribute to a positive solution of this question at the forthcoming Geneva talks.

The CHAIRMAN (interpretation from Spanish): I have no other speakers on my list for this afternoon. For tomorrow, there are two speakers for the morning meeting and one speaker for the afternoon meeting.

As members can see, the general debate on the question of disarmament is proceeding rather slowly. May I urge members, therefore, to place their names on the list of speakers as soon as possible.

The meeting rose at 4 p.m.