Thirteenth Session  
FIRST COMMITTEE  
VERBATIM RECORD OF THE NINE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-SIXTH MEETING  

Held at Headquarters, New York,  
on Tuesday, 21 October 1958, at 10:30 a.m.  

Chairman: Mr. URCULA (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. NUÑEZ-PORLUONDO (Cuba) (interpretation from Spanish): Mr. Chairman, since this is the first time during the present session that the Cuban delegation has spoken in the First Committee, we would like, on behalf of the people and Government of Cuba, to congratulate you on your well-earned and well-deserved election to the Chair of this Committee. Your election is also a tribute paid by the Assembly to our sister Republic of El Salvador. For many years we have been honoured at being a personal friend of yours and we are well aware of the magnificent work you have done for the cause of peace. We are sure that you will succeed in the discharge of your tasks. We would also like to congratulate the Vice-Chairman and Rapporteur of the Committee, the distinguished representatives of Sudan and Austria, on their election. They represent two countries with which Cuba maintains cordial relations, as it does with their representatives in this Organization.

The question of disarmament has been on our agenda for many years. At every session we have gone into an extremely exhaustive discussion of the question without so far having been able to achieve a result that might be labelled satisfactory. In many cases, our debates have only served to subject us to listening to statements that have not contained a single constructive idea, statements made with propaganda aims. Such statements obviously are not addressed to the Governments or their representatives, since we are all familiar with the item and its implications. These speeches are made to fool the unwar who, unaware of the realities, consider that the problem could easily be solved by the mere use of words, although they could, if they wanted, observe that those words are seldom, if ever, followed by deeds which would prove the good faith
of those participating in the debates. It must be obvious that I am referring only to those people who reaffirm their pacifist eagerness and then, once out of this room, let loose aggression in all parts of the world. To those Governments we might apply the words of the Holy Bible, "By their deeds ye shall know them".

Before going into the substance of the matter we are discussing, I feel that we ought to make known, clearly and unmistakeably, the views of the people and the Government of Cuba. We did so last year when we spoke in the debate on this question, and so far as we can judge, circumstances have not changed by one whit. In Cuba the people are pacifists. They were even before the discovery of America, when the natives, the riboneyes, were known for their love of peace. We have never wanted to conquer foreign territories, much less have we threatened to make war on any nation. Cuba fought in the last two world wars in fulfillment of solemn international obligations freely contracted. Millions of Cubans fought in these two conflagrations in the Allied armies; our merchant marine was totally destroyed and many of the crews lost their lives in the line of duty. Yet Cuba did not claim compensation of any sort from the defeated States, and at present we enjoy cordial relations with them. Therefore, it must be obvious to all that Cuba and its people are resolute enemies of war as a way of solving international problems, and it was for that reason that Cuba became a Member of the United Nations and promised to fulfil the provisions of the Charter.
The Government and the people of Cuba are not and cannot be neutral in the conflict that at present divides the world. We have signed treaties of mutual assistance with all the American nations, and these constitute obligations that we will honour in the future as we have done in the past. Our traditions, our political philosophy, our religion, our culture and our way of life are all opposed to the godless and imperialist totalitarianism of one of the sides in discord, and we shall never perform any act that might be interpreted, even indirectly, as in any way weakening the position of our principal allies, who, by defending themselves, are also saving the world from the expansionist endeavours of the aggressive Powers.

Since we cannot ignore this reality which surpasses all other considerations, we feel that the United States of America, because of its strength in all fields, is the main defender of our liberties and independence. As a consequence of this clear truth, which no one can deny, we will give them our most loyal and determined support in all problems that touch upon peace and international security. This does not necessarily mean, since we are two equally sovereign States, that in the future we shall not stress, as we have done in the past, our own views as well as our objections to the United States when we consider that the position of the United States might be contrary to the mutual interests which we are defending. Thus, we shall be complying with what we feel to be the duty of friends and allies. This is the reason for our persistence on the need for changing propaganda methods that have turned out to be quite inferior to those used by the Soviet Union.

Having set forth our position so no one can be deceived, I should like, nevertheless, to state that Cuba feels that some agreement on disarmament is extremely necessary. For an underpopulated State with little military power, wars are inevitably harmful and produce irreparable damage. We have no ambitions for foreign soil; we want only to defend our national independence. We do not wish to be masters of any nor will we accept to be servants of any great Power or nationality.

We consider that the problem we are debating has not been clearly explained so as to allow the great masses of the world to understand it. Many people receive only large amounts of propaganda from the aggressor Powers. We shall try to explain briefly how we think this question should be analysed.
In case of war, both sides would use all the means of destruction at their disposal. We have no doubt whatever that the aggressor Powers would use all the means of mass destruction forbidden by international law and international treaties. War would be waged with conventional weapons, which are also of tremendous deadly power, plus atomic weapons, which undeniably could produce greater damage than the conventional weapons.

The Soviet Union and its satellites and Communist China have the advantage in the field of conventional weapons. Their armies and particularly their human reserves, are undoubtedly much greater than those at the disposal of the Western Powers. The only factor that equates the situation is the atomic weapon, not because the Soviet Union does not possess it but because we are all convinced that if the atomic weapon were to be used, the least that could possibly happen would be that all would be wiped out - there would be no victors and no vanquished. This outcome would not be convenient to the aggressor Powers, and it would certainly not be the type of price they would be willing to pay for war.

When anyone states that the peoples of the world believe that atomic weapons have not served to maintain the integrity of States and preserve the liberties of peoples, they are expressing an opinion which deserves respect but which is, in our view, replete with errors. The history of the last few years demonstrates the contrary. The States and peoples that were unable to defend themselves because they lacked sufficient weapons to resist aggression are now under the yoke of the most dreadful slavery. The Governments and peoples that had atomic weapons or who were allies of such countries have managed to remain free. As examples of the first groups of States I shall mention the countries of Central Europe, China, the Baltic States, East Germany, North Korea and North Viet-Nam. As examples of the second group of States I shall mention West Germany, South Viet-Nam, South Korea and the Republic of China. The latter two have heroically resisted the tide of conquest.

If even in good faith one were to want to proscribe atomic weapons separately from a general agreement on disarmament, it would mean implicitly granting a green light to the Soviet Union to carry out its desires of world conquest. It would be the same as having a boxing match in which one of the contenders would be forced to fight with one hand tied behind him while his opponent would be free to use both hands. This is an illustration which I believe will appeal to both the American and the Cuban peoples.
Of course it would be much better to establish the basis for agreement that could pave the way for the prohibition of the use of atomic weapons, but in full knowledge of our responsibility we wish to state that so long as that agreement is not comprehensive as a whole, it would be dangerously imprudent to accept the prohibition of the use of a weapon which equates the strength of both sides. An agreement on disarmament with full and absolute guarantees against surprise attacks and attacks of any type was recommended by one of the greatest men of our era, His Holiness the late Pope Pius XII, whose death has been mourned all over the world regardless of political or religious beliefs and whose name will be known in history as the "Pope of Peace".

We stated last year, and we repeat now, that fundamentally the question of disarmament is a question of mutual trust. Perhaps I should refresh the memories of the members of the Committee. For a long period following the Second World War the United States was the only possessor of atomic bombs. It did not attack anyone and no State was menaced or threatened. Not a single inch of foreign land was taken by the United States. These are facts which cannot be denied.
I do not wish to make my statement interminable and therefore I shall not enumerate all the countries conquered by the Soviet Union, but I believe it would be appropriate to recall here that the Prime Minister of that country on several occasions has made terrifying warnings that atomic weapons will be used, even against Switzerland, which has always been a model of good behaviour in international relations. Furthermore, the massive campaign by Moscow and world communism against the atomic and hydrogen bombs exclusively is certainly not based on humanitarian reasons but is surely intended to disarm unilaterally the United States, the United Kingdom and France, thus allowing the Soviet Union to remain overwhelmingly superior in conventional weapons and manpower.

In the course of the debate we have heard it said, and it may possibly be true, that the experts who met in Geneva have arrived at the conclusion that it is possible to detect clandestine atomic explosions. We approve this forward step, although at the same time we feel that it is necessary, even indispensable, that we obtain full guarantees against surprise attacks with conventional weapons and also that the military forces and the capacities of the armies of both sides be balanced. The reason for this is that, as free countries, we do not wish to be victims of atomic weapons. We certainly do not want to lose our freedom and independence, even if only through the use of conventional weapons.

My delegation will not support any draft resolution intended to bring about a partial solution of the disarmament problem, particularly if related to the subject of atomic weapons. On the other hand, we are ready to give our enthusiastic support to any initiative towards solving the question of disarmament as an integral whole with mutual guarantees of strict fulfilment of the contracted obligations and with military forces stabilized on a basis of complete parity. We are sincerely convinced that the Western Powers have no desire to conquer or destroy the Soviet Union, and facts have proved this; but our countries, in all legitimate right, want to obtain complete and positive guarantees that the Soviet Union will not conquer us as it has so many other countries in the last few years.

The Government of Cuba has given very serious consideration to all the draft resolutions submitted to the Committee. We are also studying with great interest the ideas expressed by the Government of Mexico in the two excellent speeches
made by that country's illustrious Foreign Minister, Mr. Padilla Nervo, before the General Assembly and in this Committee; and at the proper time we shall explain our position in regard to these statements.

My delegation has already formed an opinion on some of the draft resolutions, and we are trying to get some clarification on other draft resolutions in order to arrive at a definite position on them. Our votes will of course be in accordance with the fundamental ideas expressed in this statement.

In the course of the general debate in the General Assembly, on 2 October, we made a suggestion that, we believe, is closely linked with the question of disarmament. We said then, and we repeat today:

"The Cuban delegation would like to suggest that, just as a special fund has been established on a voluntary basis for technical assistance, an emergency fund should also be set up for the maintenance of peace, financed by voluntary contributions, so that the Secretary-General can deal with unexpected emergency situations when they lead to expenditures exceeding the budget appropriations for such purposes. It seems to us neither fair nor just that all Member States should have to contribute -- as in the case of the Emergency Force -- according to the percentage which they contribute to the regular costs of the Organization. Undoubtedly, the maintenance of peace is of equal concern to all; but it is no less obvious that there are small, traditionally peace-loving States which do not provoke disputes or conflicts, and which do not intervene in any way in disputes occurring in other areas of the world. Thus it seems unjust to such States that they should be asked to make contributions as large as if they bore an equal share of responsibility for these problems."

"In this connexion, we would draw attention to the memorandum presented by the twenty Latin American delegations when this matter was raised for the first time two years ago. If it is decided to establish a special or emergency fund for the maintenance of international peace, the permanent members of the Security Council should make the largest initial contributions. This might perhaps render unnecessary the drastic increase from $22 million to $30 million in the United Nations Working Capital Fund."
"Should such an emergency fund for the maintenance of peace be established, the same procedure could be adopted as is followed in securing funds for the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance."

(A/PV.767, pp.17-20)

The Cuban delegation, for the moment, has no intention of presenting a draft resolution on this question of fundamental importance. We would do so only in the case of a total agreement on the question of disarmament. But we should like other delegations to consider this idea so that it might serve as a basis for discussion in the future.

Mr. SCHURMANN (Netherlands): Mr. Chairman, the guidance that you have already given to the deliberations on this vitally important subject now before us has proved the wisdom shown by our Committee in electing you as our Chairman. In the name of my delegation, I should like to extend to you my sincere and warm congratulations. The efficiency of our discussions will no doubt benefit greatly from your ability, your experience and your prestige. I also welcome the Vice-Chairman, Mr. Osman, and the Rapporteur, Mr. Matsch, to their high offices. We are fortunate indeed to have found such able men for these responsible positions.

Allow me to begin my remarks on the subject under discussion by recalling that our deliberations on disarmament during the last session of the General Assembly ended in a deadlock. This deadlock, as my friend and neighbour from New Zealand pointed out yesterday, occurred on two issues. Firstly, it proved impossible for the principal Powers concerned to come to an agreement on matters of substance; secondly, the very possibility of continuing the negotiations seemed to be reduced to a minimum as a result of the boycott by the Soviet Union of the Disarmament Commission and its Sub-Committee, although the Western Powers, in agreeing to a considerable expansion of the Disarmament Commission, had gone out of their way to meet the wishes of the Soviet Union concerning the composition of that body.
We were shocked by this deadlock, coming as it did at the end of twelve years of frustration, during which the United Nations had made hardly any progress in the field of disarmament.

As a result of Russian obstruction and evasion, all our endeavours seemed to have produced no more than words and promises -- and perhaps a better understanding of the positions of East and West. We had established commissions and dissolved them again and, in an ultimate effort to reach at least some agreement on disarmament, we had brought the principal Powers concerned together in a small sub-committee, only to hear, in due course, that after 157 meetings their work had also resulted in failure.

It was therefore with some relief that my delegation noted that the period between the 12th and the 13th General Assemblies, which had appeared to hold none but gloomy prospects, was used for constructive and promising work, the result of which makes us feel that there is now some real hope for significant progress. That progress may -- and should -- be achieved during the meeting of the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States to discuss a possible agreement on the cessation of atomic and hydrogen weapons tests, that will start in Geneva on 31 October, and also in the discussions on the practical aspects of safeguarding against surprise attacks, which experts of both sides will initiate on 10 November.

These developments have not entirely broken the deadlock in the field of disarmament, because, as the Secretary-General has so rightly pointed out in his annual report, they represent only "marginal approaches to the central problem". But we do believe that, if both conferences should finally lead to agreement, the distrust between the great Powers, which has put its curse on the disarmament negotiations for so many years, may be reduced and impetus may be given to further progress in other fields of disarmament.

The developments of the last year have resulted in what is now called the "technical approach" towards disarmament. The merit of that approach, in our view, is that it facilitates political decisions by having them preceded by a thorough investigation of their practical consequences.

Because of our wish to give the technical approach every possible chance, we regret the statement made on 13 October in this Committee by the representative of the Soviet Union. Mr. Zorin on that occasion denied the desirability of
applying the method of technical approach to other disarmament problems besides the questions of nuclear tests and of safeguarding against surprise attack.

Though we acknowledge the merits inherent in the technical approach, our delegation does not accept that approach without reservations. We do not see in it a panacea for disarmament. Progress made in the technical field is only valuable if it acts as an aid and an incentive to do our essential and urgent duty, which is to disarm, and to do so in such a way as to guarantee the continuous security in the world throughout the process of disarmament. And that can only be done through political negotiations.

It is the opinion of my delegation that the interdependence between the technical and political methods must also serve to remind us that the essential elements of disarmament, namely nuclear and conventional disarmament as well as effective control, are inextricably linked to each other. They constitute "one organic whole" as the representative of Mexico so rightly said in his important intervention. We do not hold this view for any pedantic or philosophical reasons but on the grounds of the most obvious practical necessity. The Netherlands, as a country situated on the seaboard of Western Europe, cannot escape being continuously aware of the presence of the enormous armed strength -- especially in the form of conventionally equipped manpower -- of the Soviet Union a few hundred miles to the East of our borders. These huge armies form an ominous threat that can only be held in check by nuclear armaments -- because Western Europe just does not have a sufficient number of soldiers to match these myriads of marching men. And that to us is the crux of the matter. We cannot agree to rule nuclear armaments out of the picture unless the Leviathan of the Red Army is also reduced to a reasonable size. To do the one without the other would be to make ourselves defenceless against an overwhelming numerical majority -- a policy which has never served any country well.

During the general debate it was stated that this Assembly should curb its ambitions and should concentrate on promoting an agreement between the nuclear Powers with regard to the cessation of nuclear tests. Under the reservations which I have just mentioned, I agree with this point of view. The Netherlands Government and the people of the Netherlands sincerely desire
an early and permanent cessation of nuclear tests. The public pressure for such a cessation has been strengthened since the contents of the report of the Scientific Commission on Atomic Radiation have become known; scientists of the highest standing serve on this Commission, and its composition is based on a broad geographic distribution; the conclusions of the Committee, though couched in careful scientific terms, indicate clearly and warningly the dangers for mankind, resulting from the continuance of nuclear tests. The Geneva Conference, in our view, should not fail to draw its own conclusions from this report, as well. The discussions among experts from both sides concerning the possibilities for detection and identification of these tests that took place in Geneva in July and August of this year have enabled it to do so and also to agree on their cessation.

The Assembly has recognized the essential importance of the elements of control in any agreement on disarmament. No agreement on cessation of nuclear tests can be inaugurated without a control system; nor can it be continued without its proper operation. It would be desirable to have the control system incorporated into the sum total United Nations machinery, but, whatever its form, name or methods, it is indispensable that it should be effective and permanently and continuously effective.
Mutual trust, which has been recognized as an element in the undertaking of disarmament, can only grow if, while controlled cessation of tests is being tried out, satisfactory progress continues to be made in respect of other aspects of disarmament. This progress on other aspects is also necessary for reasons of security. If one party, through cessation of its atomic and hydrogen weapons tests, is no longer in a position to build up its capacity for defence, it is but logical that the other party should not be allowed to continue to strengthen its offensive power by increasing its production of atomic and hydrogen weapons. It is therefore imperative that the cessation of nuclear tests should be followed -- and followed quickly -- by a cessation of the production of nuclear weapons, by reduction of the stocks of nuclear weapons, and by a lowering of the levels of armies and of conventional armaments, and that all this should be done not unilaterally but by agreement.

To the coming meeting of experts in Geneva on 10 November of this year, which will explore the practical aspects of safeguarding against surprise attack, I wish to express our earnest hope for its success. Such success would imply concrete results in the technical field, without prejudice to the political negotiations on the minimizing of the dangers of surprise attack, which should follow if technical agreement should be reached.

It is on the strength of these considerations that the Netherlands delegation has co-sponsored the seventeen-Power draft resolution (A/C.1/L.205). It is our belief that this draft resolution formulates in an adequate and appropriate way the expectations of the General Assembly with regard to the forthcoming discussions in Geneva and also indicates the course to be followed towards real disarmament. Furthermore, the draft resolution contains a clear recognition of the responsibility of the United Nations in this field for the present as well as for the future.

From what I said, it will follow that my delegation cannot support the draft resolutions on the discontinuance of atomic and hydrogen weapons tests introduced by the Soviet Union and by India, together with a number of other States. We are convinced that a cessation of nuclear tests has to be reached on the basis of a formal agreement. The conclusion of such an agreement will be the goal of the forthcoming conference at Geneva. It is to the attainment of that goal that our urgent attention should be directed, and not to a request to parties to stop nuclear test explosions without agreement.
(Mr. Schurmann, Netherlands)

On the draft resolution (A/C.1/L.204) of the Soviet Union concerning the reduction of military budgets by 15 per cent and the use of part of the savings so effected for assistance to the under-developed countries, I should like to make the following comment. Of course we are in favour of reducing the military budgets of all States, but at the same time we feel that such a reduction can be carried through only as a result of an agreement on the reduction of armed forces and armaments, both conventional and nuclear. To separate these two elements would mean that the impact which the reduction of military budgets, carried through by the principal Powers, will have on the nuclear and conventional strength of these Powers, cannot be known. Thus, here again, action not based on previous agreement between the Powers involves serious risks of affecting the balance of power and security in the world. My remark on this point, I think, proves also that no reduction of military budgets can be carried through without appropriate and effective control, and it has already been pointed out in this Committee that the draft resolution of the Soviet Union contains no provisions at all in this respect. Moreover, in discussing the reductions of military budgets, we all realize that the budgetary systems of the principal Powers differ greatly; this also applies to the socio-economic structures of these Powers, and therefore budgetary reductions of the same magnitude, as proposed by the Soviet Union, will not have the same effects in both camps. Therefore, this question requires much further study before any action can be taken.

Concerning the linking of the possible reduction of military budgets to real disarmament I want to emphasize also, to avoid any misunderstanding, that it is the considered opinion of my delegation -- and one which has been expressed often on previous occasions -- that the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples, in particular of the less developed countries, is so essential for the maintenance of peace and security in the world that it would be wholly unjustified if we were to postpone measures for the improvement of living conditions, especially in the less developed countries, until effectively controlled world-wide disarmament had been secured. Fortunately, we did not wait to establish a Special Fund for this purpose, and we trust that this Fund will expand in such a way that it can become really effective, irrespective of
whether armaments budgets are reduced or not. What should come from the savings on armaments is not funds for economic development, but additional funds for that development.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.