Tribute to the memory of General George C. Marshall

1. Mr. SCHMIDT (Brazil) wished to pay a tribute to the memory of the United States General George C. Marshall, who had died on Friday, 16 October. The free world owed him an immense debt of gratitude, for he had originated a highly constructive undertaking dedicated to the maintenance of democracy—the Marshall Plan, which had made it possible to Europe to carry out successfully an imposing reconstruction effort after the Second World War. Thus, General Marshall had fully deserved the award of the Nobel Peace Prize.

2. Mr. LODGE (United States of America) was very touched by the tribute paid by the representative of Brazil to the memory of General Marshall. General Marshall was not only a great statesman but, more important than that, a great soul.

AGENDA ITEM 70

General and complete disarmament (A/4218, A/4219, A/C.1/818, A/C.1/820) (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

3. Mr. ORMSBY-GORE (United Kingdom) said that successive Governments in the United Kingdom had for many years been strenuously seeking a solution to the problems of "comprehensive" disarmament as the United Kingdom called it, but the meaning was the same as "general and complete". The concept of comprehensive disarmament was far from novel; what was novel was the apparent readiness to consider it in a new spirit. The plans put forward by the United Kingdom and France in the Sub-Committee of the Disarmament Commission in 1954 1/ and 1956 2/ had dealt with comprehensive disarmament, and it was solely because progress toward a far-reaching solution had seemed to be barred that the substitute partial disarmament plan, approved by the General Assembly in resolution 1148 (XII), had been considered.

4. Because the USSR had withdrawn at that time from the Sub-Committee, discussion on disarmament had been interrupted for nearly two years. In 1958, however, negotiations had taken place on a subject which, while it was not true disarmament, was nevertheless closely related to disarmament—the question of the discontinuance of nuclear weapons tests. The Western Powers had never lost sight of the goal of comprehensive disarmament. During the Foreign Ministers' Conference at Geneva in the summer of 1959, the Western Powers had proposed a plan which dealt with "comprehensive disarmament measures".

5. He had been very gratified when the Disarmament Commission, in a unanimous resolution (A/4209), had approved the decision of the four Foreign Ministers to set up the ten-Power disarmament committee. Thus, a resumption of negotiations would make possible a detailed consideration of the disarmament problem.

6. The British position was based on the premise that, to be generally acceptable, a disarmament plan must not give any country or group of countries a significant military advantage. It followed that measures of disarmament in both the conventional and nuclear fields had to proceed simultaneously. If nuclear weapons alone were abolished, some countries or groups of countries, with small conventional forces, would be confronted by other countries or groups of countries with much larger conventional forces, the precarious balance would be destroyed, and tension would inevitably be heightened. Experience had shown how destructive a war fought with conventional weapons might be; and since 1945 the lethal power of conventional weapons had immensely increased.

7. Moreover, as had been pointed out by the experts from many countries, including the United States, the USSR, India, Japan and the United Kingdom, who had met in 1958 to discuss questions connected with disarmament and atomic energy, nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction might be eliminated from the arsenals, but the knowledge of how to produce such weapons could never be destroyed; in any future war, each belligerent State would be compelled to undertake production of nuclear weapons for fear that the enemy might outstrip it. In such a situation, the means of waging war in any form must be eliminated, and in the meantime, a disequilibrium which might have fatal consequences must be avoided.

8. That was a formidable task. An essential ingredient of all progress was confidence on the part of all that the scheme did in fact provide equal security against the risk of war. Moreover, such confidence would promote the dissolution of many causes of tension. That was one of the reasons why the United Kingdom Government had always laid emphasis on the importance of

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2/ Ibid., Supplement for January to December 1956, document DC/83, annex 2.
3/ Conference on the dangers of the atomic age and what scientists can do about them (Third Pugwash Conference), held at Ritzhotel and Vienna from 14 to 20 September 1958.
effective control at each stage of disarmament. The United Kingdom delegation had therefore been interested to note the Soviet Union representative's statement that his Government considered that control was not an end in itself but was inseparable from disarmament (1026th meeting). That was also the opinion of the United Kingdom Government. What was needed was that, from the moment that disarmament started, there should be control to ensure that disarmament was in fact taking place in accordance with the undertakings given. The Western Powers wished to institute control solely for that purpose and not for obtaining military intelligence.

9. On 17 September 1959 the United Kingdom Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Selwyn Lloyd, had outlined to the Assembly (798th plenary meeting) a plan for an approach to comprehensive disarmament (A/C.1/620). It consisted of a first stage, in which confidence would be restored, followed by a second stage, in which reductions in armaments and armed forces would be effected under appropriate control, thus leading to the third stage, which would be comprehensive disarmament.

10. The speech made by the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, Mr. Khrushchev, the General Assembly (799th plenary meeting) showed that on some points the positions of the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom had come closer together. There were, of course, differences on a number of points, such as the Soviet view of the sanctions which should be retained against a violator of the international treaty on comprehensive disarmament. In that connexion, Mr. Lodge had submitted (1027th meeting) some interesting ideas. It was, however, encouraging to note that the Soviet Union no longer insisted upon an immediate ban on nuclear weapons before any start could be made on reductions in conventional forces, or on the abolition of foreign bases before disarmament in conventional weapons became complete.

11. Those proposals were a move in the direction of balanced disarmament. The USSR and United Kingdom proposals should be carefully studied, but it would not be appropriate to go into them in greater detail at the present stage. That, as the representative of Argentina had pointed out (1028th meeting), was a task for the ten-Power Committee, on which it would be appropriate for the Secretary-General to be represented, as had been the case at the Conference on the Discontinuance of Nuclear Weapons Tests, and to which the records of the present discussions should be made available. As Mr. Khrushchev had said on his return from the United States, the consideration of the various proposals and counter-proposals should not be hurried.

 Provision had already been made for the ten-Power Committee to report to the Disarmament Commission and that, as the representative of Brazil had pointed out (1029th meeting), would allow the United Nations to follow the Committee's work.

12. The Conference on the Discontinuance of Nuclear Weapons Tests had demonstrated the value of patience in negotiations. Since it had taken nearly a year to agree on the language of a preamble and of seventeen articles, it was somewhat optimistic to expect the goal of comprehensive disarmament to be reached in four years. The fact remained that both sides had made real concessions.

13. Unanimity had not yet, however, been achieved on the question of what constituted adequate control. The problem was largely a scientific and technical one. New scientific evidence had become available which should be examined so that one could be sure that whatever control system was eventually established could be relied on. It should be possible to reach an agreement to which the other countries would, it was hoped, adhere. There would then be no further tests of nuclear weapons nor would such weapons be manufactured, since no country would invest the sums required if it was not able to undertake test explosions. That would be a signal achievement for it would demonstrate that effective control was possible and that there could be specific co-operation between East and West.

14. The prospects for disarmament were brighter than at any time since the Second World War. Convincing that the problem of industrial reconversion could be resolved without difficulty, the United Kingdom delegation looked forward with hope to the forthcoming negotiations.

The meeting rose at 4.5 p.m.