

# Stand-still Agreement

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Jawaharlal Nehru

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I welcome this opportunity to state the position of the Government and, I feel sure, of the country on the latest of all the dreaded weapons of war, the hydrogen bomb, and its known and unknown consequences and horrors.

The United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, we are told, possess this weapon and each of these countries has, during the last two years, effected test explosions unleashing impacts which in every respect were far beyond those of any weapons of destruction known to man.

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A further and more powerful explosion than the one of March 1st has been effected by the United States and more are reported to have been scheduled to take place.

We know little more about the hydrogen bomb and its disastrous and horrible consequences than what has appeared in the Press or is otherwise a matter of general knowledge or speculation. But even what we do know, and the very fact that the full facts of the effects of these explosions do not appear to be known or to be ascertainable with any certainty even by scientists, point to certain conclusions. A new weapon of unprecedented power both in volume and intensity, with an unascertained, and probably unascertainable range of destructive potential in respect of time and space, that is, both as regards duration and the extent of consequences, is being tested, unleashing its massive power, for use as a weapon of war. We know that its use threatens the existence of man and civilization as we know it. We are told that there is no effective protection against the hydrogen bomb and that millions of people may be exterminated by a single explosion and many more injured, and perhaps still many more condemned to slow death, or to live under the shadow of the fear of disease and death.

There can be little doubt about the deep and widespread concern in world, particularly among peoples, about these weapons and their dreadful consequences. But concern is not enough. Fear and dread do not lead to constructive thought or effective courses of action. Panic is no remedy against disaster of any kind, present or potential.

Mankind has to awaken itself to the reality and face the situation with determination and assert itself to avert calamity.

The general position of this country in this matter has been repeatedly stated and placed beyond all doubt. It is up to us to pursue as best we can the objective we seek.

We have maintained that nuclear (including thermonuclear), chemical and biological (bacterial) knowledge and power should not be used to forge these weapons of mass destruction. We have advocated the prohibition of such weapons, by common consent, and immediately by agreement amongst those concerned, which latter is at present the only effective way to bring about their abandonment.

The House will, no doubt, recall the successive attempts made by us at the United Nations to secure the adoption of this view and approach.

At the last session of the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1953, as a result of the amendment moved by our delegation to the Resolution on Disarmament, there were incorporated in the resolution that was adopted:

- (1) An "affirmation" by the General Assembly of its "earnest desire for the elimination and prohibition of atomic, hydrogen, bacterial, chemical and other weapons of war and mass destruction and for the attainment of these ends through effective means."
- (2) A provision for setting up a sub-committee of the powers principally involved, to sit in private, and at places of its choosing to implement the purposes of the Disarmament Commission.

Pending progress towards some solution, full or partial, in respect of the prohibition and elimination of these weapons of mass destruction, which the General Assembly has affirmed as its nearest desire, the Government would consider, among the steps to be taken now and forthwith, the following:

- (1) Some sort of what may be called "standstill agreement" in respect, at least, of these actual explosions, even if agreements about the discontinuance of production and stock-piling must await more substantial agreements amongst those principally concerned.
- (2) Full publicity by those principally concerned in the production of these weapons, and by the United Nations, of the extent of the destructive power and the known effects of these weapons and also adequate indication of the unknown but probable effects. Informed world public opinion is, in our view, the most effective factor in bringing about the results we desire.

- (3) Immediate (and continuing) private meetings of the sub-committees of the Disarmament Commission to consider the "standstill" proposal which I have just mentioned pending decisions on prohibitions, controls, etc., to which the Disarmament Commission is asked by the General Assembly to address itself.
- (4) Active steps by States and peoples of the world who, though not directly concerned with the production of these weapons, are very much concerned with the possible use of them, and also, at present, with these experiments and their effects. They would, I venture to hope, express their concern and add their voices and influence in as effective a manner as possible to arrest the progress of this destructive potential which menaces all alike.

The Government of India will use its best efforts in pursuit of these objectives.

We do not yet know fully whether the continuous effects of these explosions are carried only by the media of air and water or whether they subsist in other strata of nature and how long their effects persist, or whether they set up some sort of chain reactions at which some have already hinted.

We must endeavour with faith and hope to promote all efforts that seek to bring to a halt this drift to what appears to be the menace of total destruction.