

**December 27, 1962**

**Bulgarian UN Representative Milko Tarabanov,  
Report to Bulgarian Communist Party Politburo on  
Disarmament Negotiations**

**Citation:**

"Bulgarian UN Representative Milko Tarabanov, Report to Bulgarian Communist Party Politburo on Disarmament Negotiations", December 27, 1962, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Bulgarian Central State Archive , Sofia, Fond 1-B, Opis 91, a.e. 927, pp. 26-36. Translated by Greta Keremidchieva and edited by Jordan Baev. Obtained by the Bulgarian Cold War Research Group.  
<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/116254>

**Summary:**

UN Representative Milko Tarabanov reported to the Bulgarian Communist Party Politburo recent developments of the Conference of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament. The report summarizes the conference's work from November 1962-December 1962, the period following the Cuban Missile Crisis. Tarabanov reports that Western powers put forward two draft agreements calling for the cessation of nuclear tests in the atmosphere, under water and in outer space, and underground--the proposals were debated during the 17th United Nations session.

The Cuban Missile Crisis occurred during the conference's session. Main issues discussed after Cuban Missile Crisis included: suspension of nuclear tests, Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko's proposal at the 17th session of the UN, ways to measure nuclear weapons testing, and military alliances (NATO).

Tarabanov also addresses the inter workings of conference members--Western, socialist, and neutral--including disagreements among Western powers. In summary Tarabanov adds that the prospect for cessation of nuclear tests is poor, but notes that the US may consider closing military bases, though not under pressure of the Soviet Union or neutral countries.

**Credits:**

This document was made possible with support from Leon Levy Foundation

**Original Language:**

Bulgarian

## **Contents:**

Translation - English

TO THE POLITBURO  
OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE  
OF THE BULGARIAN COMMUNIST PARTY

INFORMATION

on the work of the Committee of the 18 States on  
Disarmament[1]

26 November - 20 December 1962

Upon termination of their work at the beginning of September this year, the Committee of the 18 on Disarmament had not come to an agreement on any disputable issues, except on the coordination of the future program on measures, planned for the first stage of disarmament in the Soviet and in the American projects, as well as on the first four articles of the future agreement regarding common responsibilities of countries, including a number of contradictory formulations placed in brackets and presented to the USSR and the US respectively.

With regard to cessation of nuclear tests, the Western nuclear states have put forward two new draft agreements - one for cessation of all tests with on-site control regarding underground tests, and the other - for cessation of nuclear tests in the atmosphere, under water and in outer space without on-site inspections. Thus, the Americans confessed that no control and verification was necessary to stop the tests in these three categories. No agreement was reached because the Western countries insisted on compulsory verification after the cessation of underground tests. The question of cessation of nuclear tests became a primary issue in the debates on disarmament at the 17th United Nations session.

Even before the interruption of the work of the Conference of the 18 with regard to the 17th session of the UN General Assembly, the Western countries insisted that the Committee convene on 12 November, right after the end of the discussion on UN disarmament. Their aim was to create the impression among non-committed countries that they were willing to achieve an agreement with the USSR on some urgent questions regarding disarmament as soon as possible.

Western countries had in mind not only the public opinion in neutral countries but also the reaction to every interruption of the negotiations in their own countries, which was extremely sharp. The public reaction in Great Britain and Canada is indicative in this respect. They came to the conclusion that continuing the negotiations on disarmament does not imply any particular risk for their opposition to disarmament to be entirely disclosed, taking into account their methods of procrastination by inquiring "explanations," asking questions with regard to verification, [submitting] requests for founding technical commissions and working groups for investigating some issues related to the Soviet proposals.

The socialist countries, [which are] members of the Committee of the 18 [e.g., the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Romania], were also ready to resume the talks right after their return from the discussion on disarmament in the United Nations. On the one hand, they were willing to meet the requirements of neutral countries for achieving consensus on cessation of nuclear tests, and, on the other hand to elaborate on the new Soviet proposals, raised at the 17th session with regard to liquidating the means of procuring nuclear weapons, namely: proposals made by Soviet Foreign minister [Andrei] Gromyko at the beginning of the 17th UN session concerning the storage of a restricted number of missiles by the US and USSR until the second disarmament stage. These proposals, made in order to respond to the opinions and fears of Western delegations expressed during the Geneva talks, were echoed at the 17th UN session among neutral and even among some Western countries.

The willingness of countries to stay in contact immediately after the Caribbean [Cuban missile] crisis contributed to the quick resumption of work in the Committee for disarmament.

The main issues to be discussed in the general debates after the resumption of work on 26 November in the Committee of 18 were suspension of nuclear tests, on which the UN General Assembly voted a special resolution, as well as the question of removing the means for procurement of nuclear weapons with regard to the latest Soviet proposals.

Neutral countries highlighted their eagerness to achieve an agreement on nuclear tests by the end of the year. A series of proposals were made in order to create an opportunity for bringing views closer. These proposals, although with different nuances, offered possibilities for on-site control and verification and thus came closer to the US view. This was a kind of diversion from the main topics in the Memorandum of the 8.[2] These proposals could be characterized as follows:

- Establishing a temporary commission of scientists and experts to control the implementation of a temporary cessation of underground nuclear tests;
- . On-site control in dubious situations by the decision of the temporary commission;
- . Determining a certain number (a quota) of inspections which nuclear states are obliged to allow on their territories.

□□

During the last session of the Committee of the 18, India demonstrated considerable uncertainty and stepped back from their earlier statements on cessation of nuclear tests and disarmament as a whole. The Indian representative defended the idea of a certain "quota of invitations" which nuclear states should be obliged to extend in case dubious tremors are registered on their territory. On the other hand, in the very beginning when the question of the need for prioritizing the elimination of the nuclear threat was put forward, the Indian representative reacted in a strange way stating that conventional weapons shall not be neglected either since they could also be a serious threat to peace. There is no doubt that the position of the Indian delegate was provoked by the border dispute between the People's Republic of China and India with the hope that the latter will be supported by Western countries against eventual further aggravation of the conflict with the People's Republic of China.

Generally speaking, during this session all neutral countries expressed their reserved attitude towards the positions of socialist countries. They tried to create an atmosphere for negotiations on nuclear tests between the Soviet Union and the US even beyond the memorandum framework. However, under the pressure of socialist delegations in the course of debates, as well as with regard to the talks we had with these delegations, they prepared a general declaration saying that the measures they suggest are neither interpretation, nor explanation of the Memorandum of the 8. This declaration considerably deprived Western countries of the opportunity to create the impression that the Soviet Union does not accept the Memorandum of the 8 and facilitated the position of the socialist countries on nuclear tests.

Although the Soviet proposal, made officially at the end of the session, for utilizing automatic seismic stations (so-called "black boxes) to determine the nature of some suspicious seismic phenomena was received with some reservations by Western delegations, it introduced a new element in the negotiations for cessation of nuclear tests. A number of neutral countries emphasized that it opens new opportunities to solve the problem with nuclear tests suspension.

The position of Sweden was typical for the position of the neutrals. All the time, Sweden was trying to support the US in their attempts to impose their position on compulsory on-site inspections, even in the presence of automatic seismic stations.

Relevant to this context is the report by Swedish scientists, submitted by the Swedish delegation, which contains conclusions on the impossibility to identify [automatically/remotely] all underground phenomena.

Despite the seemingly constructive tone of the declarations of the American delegation at the start of the session, later statements aimed at creating the impression among the neutrals that the United States has superior nuclear power. This became particularly obvious in the speech of the American delegate in the Committee of the 18 on 14 December, on the opening day of NATO's session. In his speech, he summarized the US positions on disarmament underlying that they would never agree to such kind of disarmament which would pose a threat to the existence of their military political alliances. In unofficial statements during a lunch, attended only by Czechoslovakian and Bulgarian delegations of all other socialist countries, the US delegate tried to create the impression among the present neutral representatives that the US was in fact the only nuclear power. When asked what that meant and wasn't the Soviet Union a nuclear state, the American delegate replied that the Cuban crisis had proved that the United States was the only nuclear country. This statement was immediately mitigated by another American delegate who explained that they mean the only real nuclear country without underestimating the entire military power of the Soviet Union and the socialist camp. In this context, the US representative severely criticized US allies who should not have strived to become independent nuclear powers since they lacked resources and capabilities, and they did not need their own nuclear power. This entire activity of the US delegation on disarmament coincided with the US-led campaign against the English nuclear weapon "Skybolt" and against France's nuclear armament.

Neutral states expressed their concerns that the Americans would continue underground tests after 1 January 1963 in order to prove that they are not committed to this date. With respect to nuclear tests, the leader of the US delegation mentioned in a private conversation that in case the US and the Soviet Union reached an agreement, they hoped to convince France to join the agreement. They believed that the Soviet Union and other socialist countries would succeed in convincing the People's Republic of China not to undertake, or not to proceed with nuclear tests.

Information provided by the Italian delegation shows that the Americans intended after the resumption of talks to make new proposals on cessation of nuclear tests, most likely in mid-February.

Considerably less time was allocated to the agreement on total disarmament.

Although in his first statement the US delegate [Arthur H. Dean] characterized the new Soviet proposal concerning missile weapons as interesting, deserving attention and opening opportunities for negotiations, in his speech on the general principles of disarmament on 14 December the US representative rejected these suggestions. The United States, however, did not succeed in making neutral countries or their allies accept their negative attitude concerning the Soviet proposals.

The behavior of Great Britain is typical. According to information from the Indian delegate, when Dean<sup>[3]</sup> delivered his speech to reject the Soviet proposal, the British delegate had a printed copy of his speech for the same session in which he made clear that they were ready to negotiate on the new Soviet proposals. Taking into account the decisive American position, he had to abandon the printed text and [had to] speak extemporaneously, not to differ from the US delegate's statement. The British representative stated that the US position surprised and even disappointed Great Britain. Later, the chief British delegate and his deputy made clear in their statements that they differed from the US positions and assumed a more constructive attitude towards the issue of automatic stations for nuclear tests control, as well as on the proposal for keeping a strict number of missiles on the territories of the USSR

and the US until the end of the second phase.

Typical for the differences between the US and other Western countries is Canada's position on tests. Almost every time delegations meet informally, it is said even as a joke that Canada is a non-committed country.

As far as Italy is concerned, the Italian delegation always supports the Americans unconditionally, but the Italian representative cannot help emphasizing that the Italian government is openly trying to stop nuclear tests and that it is for serious discussions on the Soviet proposals. When speaking in the lobby, the Italian participants are considerably more inclined to mutually acceptable decisions than in their official declarations in the Committee.

Regardless of some differences on some disarmament issues and particularly on some Soviet proposals, US allies usually succeed in imposing their attitude during the Committee sessions. Debates and talks in the Committee give reasons to believe that the chances for reaching an agreement on cessation of nuclear tests in the near future are not very big. The attitudes in some influential circles in the US, which have been reflected in private conversations with US representatives, concerning the possibilities of closing American bases under the pretext that they have become redundant with the new US strategic capabilities, give some reason to expect more productive negotiations on disarmament.

During the Caribbean crisis, the topic of finding appropriate ways and time for closing some foreign military bases in the near future was discussed repeatedly in the US media and in the statements of politicians. A similar attitude was present in private talks at the Geneva Conference. For example, a member of the American delegation and representative of the so-called "Agency for armaments and disarmament control in the US" [Arms Control and Disarmament Agency; ACDA], by the name of Mark, made it clear that they did not exclude the possibility of closing some of their bases which from [a] military and strategic perspective were considered redundant. However, this would not happen under the pressure of the USSR or neutral countries, but only when the US reckoned this as necessary and possible.

Prospects exist as well for more productive discussions of some parallel and partial measures in disarmament in order to minimize risks from an accidental war through declaring maneuvers, establishing fast direct links between the leaders of great powers, as well as between them and the UN General Secretary; the issue of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and more specifically for establishing non-nuclear zones in some areas in the world, especially in regions where the US believe that this could be favorable and would not pose any difficulties to them, such as the case with South America, Africa, the Balkans, etc.

In this situation, it could be expected that at the next session of the Committee of the 18 the United States would try to divert negotiations on disarmament towards some of the above-mentioned events. In this context, Western countries will find support among most of the neutrals. A number of statements, made by neutral delegations, show that neutral states are looking for a way out in the negotiations on total disarmament through reaching an agreement on some partial issues.

Sofia, 27 December 1962

(Signed)

Milko Tarabanov[4]

## Notes

[1] The Eighteen Nations Committee on Disarmament was established by the UN in December 1961 in Geneva and met regularly until September 1969. Its predecessor was the Ten Nations Committee on Disarmament (1960), which was formed by five representatives from NATO countries and five representatives from Warsaw Pact countries.

[2] Not further identified.

[3] Most likely Arthur H. Dean, head of the US delegation to the 18 nation disarmament committee in Geneva, rather than Sir Patrick Dean, UK representative at United Nations.

[4] Ambassador Milko Tarabanov was a Bulgarian representative to the United Nations in New York with a rank of Deputy Foreign Minister (1962-1970). In the 1940s-1950s he was chief of diplomatic missions in Italy, Czechoslovakia, and Turkey.