

STATEMENT BY ALBERT SCHWEITZER  
WITH REFERENCE TO THE  
PRESENT NUCLEAR CRISIS IN THE WORLD

IN THREE PARTS

PART III  
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What about the negotiations that could lead to the renunciation of nuclear weapons?

One reads and hears that the success of the projected Summit Conference must depend entirely on its every detail being diplomatically prepared beforehand. The best diplomacy is objectiveness. One good way of preparing (if a respectful and well-meaning criticism is permissible) would be for the statesmen and other representatives to make a change from their present undiplomatic way of dealing with each other and return to a true diplomacy. Many unnecessary, thoughtless, discourteous, foolish and offensive remarks have been spread about, both in the spoken and written word, and this was not advantageous to the political atmosphere.

It would be fitting if those who have the authority to take the responsibility, and not those who have only nominal authority and who cannot move an inch from their instructions, would confer together.

It would be fitting to go ahead with the conference. For more than four months East and West have talked and written to one another, without any conclusions as to the date and the work program being reached.

Public opinion everywhere is finding it difficult to accept this state of affairs and is beginning to ask itself whether a conference which comes into being so limpingly has any hope of really achieving anything.

It would be fitting to hold the conference in a town in some neutral European... (portion missing)

It would be fitting that at this conference only questions that have to do directly with the renunciation of nuclear weapons should be discussed.

It would be fitting if not too many people were present at the summit meeting. Only the highest personalities of the three nuclear powers together with their experts and advisers should take their seats there.

Attendance could also be permitted to the representatives of those people who - like the NATO countries with America - have connections in nuclear matters; they could then state their opinions on the decisions that hold such grave consequences also for them.

Apart from this, experience teaches us that unnecessarily large attendance brings no advantage to a conference.

The Summit Conference therefore is in no way an international of half international one, even though its decisions are of great importance to the whole of mankind.

The three nuclear powers and they alone must decide, in awareness of their responsibility to their peoples and to all mankind, whether or not they will renounce

the testing and the use of nuclear weapons.

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In regard to the planning of the conference, impartiality makes one remark justified, which is that to date such planning has been done without objectiveness, and has therefore led nowhere. This leads to the thought that the same outcome could result from the Summit Conference if it were conducted in the same manner.

What is the difference between the partial and the impartial; the fitting and the unfitting in this matter? It lies in the answer to the question on what basis the three nuclear powers decide whether or not to renounce the testing and the use of nuclear weapons.

The unobjective reply would be that the decision will depend on whether an agreement is reached on disarmament or not.

This is a false logic; it presumes that there could be an agreement, acceptable to both the East and the West on this issue. But previous negotiations have shown that this is not to be expected; they became stalled right at the start because East and West were unable to reach agreement even on the conditions under which such discussions should take place.

The anticipated procedure itself is by its very nature not impartial. It is based on false logic. The two vital issues so essential to the very existence of mankind – the cessation of tests and the disposal of nuclear weapons – cannot be made dependent on the Heavens performing the impossible political miracle that alone could insure that none of the three nuclear powers would have some objections to a complete agreement on disarmament.

The fact is that the testing and use of nuclear weapons carry in themselves the absolute reasons for their being renounced. Prior agreement on any other conditions cannot be considered.

Both cause the deepest damage to human rights. The tests do harm to peoples far from the territories of the nuclear powers – endangering their lives and their health – and this is in peace time. An atomic war, with its resultant radioactivity, would make the land of peoples not participating in such a war, unlivable. It would be the most unimaginably senseless and cruel way of endangering the existence of mankind. That it why it must not become reality.

The negotiations about disarmament are therefore not the forerunner of such agreement but the outcome of it. They start from the point where agreement on the nuclear issues has been reached, and their goal is to reach the point where the three nuclear powers and the peoples who are connected with them must agree on guarantees that will seek to avert the danger of a threat of a non-atomic nature taking the place of the previous danger. Everything that the diplomats will have done objectively to prepare the preliminaries to the conference will keep its meaning even if it will be used not before renunciation, but, as the result of it.

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Should agreement be reached on the outlawing of nuclear weapons, this by itself will lead to a great improvement in the political situation. The reason for this lies in the fact that as a result of such an agreement, time and distance would again become realities with their own rights.

Nuclear arms give a distant war the effect of a near war. The Soviet Union and the United States, in spite of the vast distance that separates them, can menace one another in so frightful a manner as though they were actually next to each other. They are neighbors but are in constant fear of their lives every minute.

But if nuclear arms no longer exist, even the rockets and missiles would not present nearly the same destructive danger. The proximity factor would be made less explosive.

Today America has her batteries of nuclear rockets readily available in Europe. Europe has become a connecting land strip between America and Russia, as if the Atlantic had disappeared and the continents came together.

But if atomic rockets are outlawed on the basis of effective and enforceable control, this unnatural state of affairs would come to an end. America would again become wholly America; Europe wholly Europe; the Atlantic again wholly the Atlantic Ocean.

The great sacrifices that America brought to Europe during the second world war and in the years following it will not be forgotten. The many-sided and great help that Europe received from her and the thanks owing for this will not be forgotten.

But the unnatural situation created by the two world wars that led to a dominating military presence in Europe, cannot continue indefinitely. It must gradually cease to exist – both for the sake of Europe and for the sake of America.

Now there will be shocked voices from all sides: What will become of poor Europe if American atomic weapons no longer defend it from within and from without? What will happen if Europe is delivered to the Soviet? Must it then not be prepared to languish in a communist babylonian form of imprisonment for long years?

What Europe and the Europeans have to agree about is that they belong together for better or for worse. This is a new historical fact that can no longer be by-passed politically.

Another factor that must be recognized politically is that it is no longer a question of subjugating peoples, but learning to get along with them mentally and spiritually.

A Europe standing on its own has no reason to despair.

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Disarmament discussions between the three nuclear powers must seek the guarantees that can bring actual, total and durable disposal of nuclear weapons. The question of control and safeguards is a vital one. Reciprocal agreement will have to be reached about allowing international commissions to inspect and investigate on national soil.

One talks of giving aircraft belonging to a world police the right to fly at medium and high altitudes for purposes of aerial inspection.

One asks to what extent a state would be willing to subject itself to such control? It may be said that unfortunate incidents could easily occur as a result. And what about the power that should be entrusted to such a world control? Even the widest form of such control could never insure that everywhere and all the time it could not be avoided? But it represents a reasonable basis on which, given time...

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The same applies also in another matter. As a result of renouncing nuclear arms, the Soviet Union's military might is so far as Europe is concerned would be less affected than that of America. There would remain to the Soviet the many armed divisions with conventional weapons; with those divisions it could easily over-run the NATO states in western Europe – particularly Western Germany without it being possible for anyone to come to their aid. With this in mind, the Soviet Union should agree in the course of disarmament negotiations to reduce her army, and to commit herself not to undertake steps against Germany. But here, too, no manner of detailed agreements and internationally guaranteed disarmament agreements would be enough. Therefore, we must strive continually to improve the situation, building brick by brick.

We live at a time when the good faith of peoples is doubted more than ever before. Expressions putting into doubt the trustworthiness of each other are bandied back and forth. They are based on what happened in the first world war when the nations experienced dishonesty, injustice and inhumanity from one another. How can a new trust come about?

We cannot continue in a situation of paralyzing mistrust. If we want to work our way out of the desperate situation in which we find ourselves another spirit must enter into the people. It can only come if the awareness of its necessity suffices to give us strength to believe in its coming. We must presuppose the awareness of this need in all the peoples who have suffered along with us. We must approach them in the spirit that we are human beings, all of us, and that we feel ourselves fitted to feel with each other; to think and will together in the same way.

The awareness that we are all human beings together has become lost in war and through politics. We have reached the point of regarding each other as only members of a people who is allied with us or against us, and our approach, prejudice, sympathy, or antipathy is all conditioned by that. Now we must rediscover the fact that we – all together – are human beings, and that we must strive to concede to each other what moral capacity we have.

That way we can begin to believe that also in other peoples there will arise the need for a new spirit, and that can be the beginning of a feeling of mutual trustworthiness towards each other. The spirit is a mighty force for transforming things. We have seen it at work as the spirit of evil which virtually threw us back from striving towards a culture of the spirit into barbarism. Now let us place our hopes that the spirit can bring people and lands back to an awareness of culture.

At this stage we have the choice of two risks; the one consists on continuing the mad atomic arms race with its danger of an unavoidable atomic war in the near future; the other in the renunciation of nuclear weapons, and in the hope that American and the Soviet Union and the peoples associated with them, will manage to live in peace. The first holds no hope of a prosperous future; the second does. We must risk the second.

In President Eisenhower's speech given on the occasion of the launching of the Sputnik on November 7<sup>th</sup>, 1957, the following words appear:

“What the world needs more than a gigantic leap into space is a gigantic leap into peace.”

This gigantic leap consists in finding the courage to hope that the spirit of good sense will arise in people and in lands, a spirit sufficiently strong to overcome

the insanity and the inhumanity.

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Once agreement on renunciation of nuclear arms has been reached it would be the responsibility of the United Nations to undertake to see that now as in the future they would neither be made nor used. The danger that one or another people might hit on the idea of manufacturing nuclear weapons will have to be kept in mind for a considerable time. We must consider ourselves lucky that there are not yet any in the possession of other peoples somewhere in the world.

The future holds many difficult problems. The most difficult of these will be the rights of access of over-populated countries to neighboring lands.

But if in our time we renounce nuclear arms we will have taken the first step on the way to the distant goal of the end to war itself. If we do not do this we remain on the road that leads to atomic war and misery in the near future.

Those who are to meet at the Summit must be aware of this, so that they can negotiate with propriety, with the right degree of seriousness, and with a full sense of responsibility.

The Summit Conference must not fail – public opinion will not accept that the renunciation of nuclear weapons, so necessary to peace, is not agreed on again this time.

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