AFRICAN DISARMAMENT--A PROPOSAL SECONDED

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I. INTRODUCTION

Though it occupies many of our waking hours, disarmament remains a dream. Unattained, still remote, realization of this dream is the goal of most of the peoples of the world, and of their governments.

The failure to achieve world-wide disarmament cannot be charged to a shortage of ideas or proposals, nor to an absence of ingenuity, advocacy, passion and eloquence. There have been a plentitude of these!

Many disarmament proposals have been presented; they embrace schemes ranging from partial disarmament to General and Complete Disarmament (GCD) by stages; particular types of inspection systems, such as zonal inspection, have been suggested, along with zonal disengagement and de-nuclearization. These remain proposals; some have been discarded and relegated to history's junk-pile, others tabled, others are still discussed. None have been adopted.

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Yet this dismal history of repeated failure can neither discourage nor prevent a fresh look, a continuing search for alternatives to standing pat. Drifting is not a policy or a course of action. Nor can we count on an automatic continuation of the good luck we have enjoyed to date in not having an all-out nuclear war. Perhaps time will mellow our problems and erode their sharp edges. Perhaps time will convert them into problems made tractable by better or more available means. Let's hope so, but let's not count on it.

Insistence that a proposal have a high a priori probability of adoption would eliminate all proposals in the conception stage. They would never see the light of day, and they would have no opportunity to struggle through infancy to maturity. For practically all proposals on disarmament have been rejected after presentation. Look at the score since WW II. Four items stand out--and they are arms control measures, not disarmament steps:

- o A partial test ban
- o The "hot" line
- o A ban on putting bombs in orbit
- o The Antarctic Treaty

The batting average is about .004! On the other hand, because the last season was better than the previous few, there is room for hope and a cautious optimism.

II. THE ORIGIN OF THIS PROPOSAL

I am not expert on African affairs; however, I did participate in the Accra Assembly,* a conference rich in meaning and experience for

*The Accra Assembly "The World Without the Bomb," Accra, Ghana, June 21-28, 1962.

me. Perhaps the highlight of this conference--because of the hope it offered for the future--was the opportunity I had of meeting and hearing J.H. Mensah of Ghana, who presented a proposal for the disarmament of Africa.(1)

After I started work on this paper, I discovered that Mensah's proposal has been printed in full in the Journal of Disarmament and Arms Control.(2)**

Before outlining Mensah's proposal, I wish to note what it is not. It is not a proposal for de-nuclearizing Africa. Such proposals usually strike me as cumbersome language used either by groups of nations who have neither nuclear weapons nor reasonable prospects of obtaining them, or by other groups of nations or a nation, which, having them, wishes to have someone else remove his weapons from a particular geographic area. "De-nuclearization of Africa," simply means that the French and the Americans should leave the continent. Of course, full demilitarization and disarmament of Africa includes and would achieve denuclearization.

Because the full text of Mensah's proposal is now readily available, I will not repeat, but only highlight his discussion. Mensah's paper is divided into four sections:

(1) The Armed Rich and the Armed Poor

(2) Armaments in Africa

(3) The Disarmament and Demilitarization of Africa

(4) Problems in the Disarmament and Demilitarization of Africa

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** This prior publication of Mensah's proposal not only did not discourage me, but emboldened me to present and discuss it. For, to the point that proposals about Africa had better come from Africa--that

In his first section he contrasts the economic aspects of the arms race when it is conducted among the great powers, and when it conducted among the poorer countries. He says: (Ref. 2 p. 172):

> "...It is generally overlooked however, that there are already economic problems of armament in the poorer countries much graver than the economic problems of either armament or disarmament in the richer countries. True, the wealthier countries could find better uses at home and abroad for the resources they so tragically waste on the arms race; but their people are not actually starving, as the people in so many underdeveloped countries are starving this very day. The arms race among the great powers is a criminal folly in the nuclear age: expenditure on armaments by the poorer countries is doubly criminal in any age. The world in which the great powers renounce their big bombs must also be a world in which the smaller powers renounce their small bombs."

He suggests that: (2, p. 172)

> "The threat to the world's peace posed by the arms race among the small powers is as great as that posed by the nuclear race among the bigger powers. There are all too many examples of client states being egged on into military adventures which carry with them the danger of intervention by the great powers on opposite sides and and subsequent escalation into thermo-nuclear conflict.

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it is gratuitous to propose about others' problems, I respond, I am only seconding the motion of J.H. Mensah; my naivete and lack of knowledge about Africa is more than compensated for by Mensah's realism and sophistication.

> This danger is present even where the bigger powers do not instigate armed conflict among the smaller powers. In a continent as artificially fragmented as Africa now is there are innumerable sources of dispute especially concerning borders. The possibility of Balkan wars in Africa over minutiae of territorial definition is not a product of the pacifist's or Pan-Africanist's imagination. We have already witnessed more than one armed conflict and many near-wars over territorial disputes in Africa. Each of the parties to such disputes has non-African friends: some of these friendships are arranged in order to obtain support against precisely this kind of dispute. There is therefore the danger that Africa, like the Balkans before now, could drag the world into a major war which nobody has planned or desires. If we could persuade the African countries to renounce armed force as a means of dealing with territorial and other disputes we will have removed one more cause of possible nuclear conflict in this world."

Mensah's purpose is (2, p. 172):

> "...to promote a scheme whereby we can achieve the disarmament and demilitarization of the African continent. Firstly this will provide us with a small-scale, and relatively easy, experiment in the solution of some of the problems of world disarmament. [Emphasis added]

> Secondly it will save for the pressing tasks of Africa's economic development some of those scarce resources that are now thrown away by their governments on armament."*

Mensah provides some data on African militarization, pointing out that in 1961-62 Ghana allocated over £12 million, 10 per cent of the total government budget, to defense and that Nigeria is providing about £40 million in her new Development Plan, about 10 per cent of the total federal program, to defence and police services.

In talking about the cost of secondary schools, he suggests the value of their product, the youths who will grow up to man the technical, professional and administrative services so patently lacking in other countries: "Each one of them is worth more to his community by a factor of a thousand than his fellow youngster in Europe or America." He says: "Military establishments are extremely wasteful of the scarcest types of manpower--people with qualties of leadership or with previous technical skills." (Ref. 2, p. 173)

Mensah summarizes both the problems of disarmament and the bases for possible negotiations. He lists the following problems ("all the familiar problems") for a program of disarmament for Africa (Ref. 2, pp. 174-176).

(i) The countries must be brought to will their own disarmament.

(ii) Alternative means must be devised for dealing with the problems previously intended to be dealt with by the dismantled armies.

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*The following important point is not in Mensah's original paper, but was added in Ref. 2 (p. 175). Being made with grace and understanding by an African, it may be more acceptable to Africa than if it were voiced from the outside: "Since African and other poor countries are so active at the United Nations generally and in the Disarmament Commission in urging great-power disarmament, it is proposed that these bodies themselves

(iii) The extent of disarmament and the level of military forces to be allowed to each country after disarmament should be agreed.

(iv) Machinery must be set up to implement and safeguard the disarmament agreement."

In describing the security arrangements which must be acceptable to all governments, he proposes the following as a basis for negotiation:

(i) That the United Nations Disarmament Commission convene an African Disarmament Conference at which an Inter-African Disarmament and Non-Aggression Pact will be negotiated.

(ii) That this Disarmament and Non-Aggression Pact be unconditionally underwritten by the states members of the United Nations jointly and severally, with the undertaking that any external aggression, from whatever source, against any African state signatory to the Pact will be met by effective resistance. It will be essential that both the NATO and Warsaw Pact Groups of countries subscribe to this guarantee; that the resistance, in a form and on a scale commensurate with the aggressor's action, shall be provided automatically and rapidly; and that the resources for providing an adequate rebuff should be accepted as a charge against all the powers guaranteeing the Inter-African Disarmament and Non-Aggression Pact.

(iii) That all armed forces above the levels mutually agreed to

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take up African disarmament, both as an instructive case study and as an end in itself, using the political forums created by the African countries and extending to them technical assistance in arranging for their disarmament."

be possessed by the African States be excluded from the African continent. Where contractual obligations exist for an African country to harbour the military forces of a non-African power--

(a) negotiations must be opened for the early termination of such agreements;

(b) in the meantime such forces should not be available to the mother country for military action against any other country, as this would lay the territory of the African host open to retaliatory attack;

(c) these forces shall not be available for any military purpose whatsoever of the African host country; in particular there should be no bilateral military agreement between host and guest country.

(iv) That the African countries undertake to accept unconditionally arbitration under the International Court of Justice in any border or other dispute among them.

Discussing the problems in the disarmament and demilitarization of Africa, Mensah notes quite accurately that the process of disarmament with external guarantees which he proposes is not an exact model for world disarmament. He suggests that in the latter case a much more complicated balance will have to be struck, and discusses the psychological problem of being a sovereign state and yet not having an army. Mensah does not ignore the quarrels which some of the several states of Africa have with each other. He says (2, p. 180):

"But disarmament must be an act of faith, an act compelled by knowledge of the costs and dangers of armaments. Any attempt to persuade African governments to disarm, will come up against the same kinds of resistance as are frustrating the attempts at world disarmament. In Africa as elsewhere Governments are notoriously incapable of appreciating the great economic burden which the arms race places on their people, or the damage to the efforts in economic developments now being made by so many African countries which would be inflicted by armed conflict. Many African governments are concerned about the threat to the world and to themselves that is posed by great-power conflict, but quite oblivious to the dangers of small-power conflict."

III. ARGUMENTS FOR THE PROPOSAL

This paper is a seconding of a proposal for the Disarmament of Africa. Consideration and discussion of this proposal by a convocation of the states concerned:

(a) will illuminate both that problem and the larger more general of world disarmament;

(b) will allow a large and important group of states to contribute to and participate in meaningful disarmament discussions;

(c) will clarify the notions of peace-keeping machinery, forces required for internal security, and the structure of outside guarantees. Further, questions ranging from the many real problems of inspection (which heretofore have been

treated on the theoretical level only) to all the problems in peaceful adjudication of disputes will be treated:

(d) above all, such discussion will involve centrally and directly, states which are at present on the periphery of disarmament forums, such as the ENDC. It would bring the subject directly to Africa, and hopefully result in more informed participation of both that problem and larger problems.

Were African disarmament started, beneficial results to Africa and the rest of the world would follow:

(a) The states of Africa who have longed for genuine influence and have hoped to be listened to on world affairs, and in matters of disarmament in particular, will, by example, demonstrate that they can undertake and carry out difficult tasks

(b) Africa would be able to contribute directly and successfully, to the deliberations of the Eighteen Nations Disarmament Conference, and to other official and unofficial forums.

(c) All the world could obtain direct, relevant, and extensible experience in the mechanics of peace-keeping, in the machinery and problems of inspection, and other problems which have to date been subjected to only theoretical discussion

(d) Africa could fulfill a need for a pilot plant for East-West active cooperation on projects of not only mutual advantage to the joint protagonists of East and West, but to the states of Africa directly. If such disarmament were accomplished, economic benefits could be directed and focussed toward the states involved.

IV. OBJECTIONS

As noted earlier, many more disarmament proposals and schemes have failed than have succeeded. Most have failed at the preliminary discussion level alone because of objections raised to them. It is easy to raise objections to any proposal. I know many of the objections to the plan I am proposing herein. Above all, the logic of inertia creates the most massive objection. Many analysts find it congenial to conclude that no plan will work, or that if it would, it shouldn't. Surely, they are often right.

To some it will appear that many African states have a vested interest in continuing instability; others may point out that a large number of African states are committed to "liberating" South Africa, Angola and other remaining non-autonomous states.(3) Even today the news media are saturating us with news from Africa. Calculation and enumeration suggests that the number of problems in Africa exceeds the number of states there by at least a factor of ten.

As someone has wisely observed, it appears that Africa is generating more history than it can consume.

From the viewpoint of the larger powers, Africa may not be building guns, but may be building triggers. We have seen recent examples of the confrontation of large powers over specific issues in Africa.

It is hard to believe that at the founding of the UN but four African states were eligible and represented: Liberia, Ethiopia, Egypt, the Union of South Africa. Since then the African bloc has grown to number almost a third of the UN.

As one turns the microscope full power on the continent of Africa, problems emerge in dizzying succession.* In order to take the long view necessary to formulate a proposal, one must back away from many of the depressing and omnipresent details. As necessary as details are for adequate and informed criticism, they obscure and clutter the path toward the making of a proposal.

V. CONCLUSION/SUMMARY

This is not a detailed proposal, but the bare bones of one. There have been many omissions in this presentation and many factors have been ignored. It would be difficult to persuade Egypt, which seems to require continued hostility and arms aimed at Israel, to join this enterprise.** For example, I have said nothing about South Africa, Southwest Rhodesia, Southwest Africa, Portuguese Guinea and Angola.

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*The combinations and permutations of African states, organization and interests have been growing with increasing speed: the U.A.M., the Brazzaville Group, the Monrovia Group, the Casablanca powers, the I.A.M.O., the PAFMECA, the A.A.P.C., the PAFMECSA, etc. For a key and quick guide to this formidable array, reminiscent of the alphabetizing of the New Deal, consult Ref. 3.

**Mensah ignored this kind of problem in the first statement of his proposal (Ref. 1,). But in Ref. 2 he adds the following paragraph (p. 181):

"The problem of relations between individual African countires and some non-African ones is very much more difficult. While forces required for a joint African purpose against colonialism or apartheid can be organized into an African command system and prevented from being used in intra-African disputes, a force needed for an individual country's external relations would have to remain under national control, unless the other countries would all agree to participate in the particular dispute--which they will not. This problem is only really important in the Arab-African states. Means must be found to induce the neighbors of such countries to discount these externally oriented forces in their security calculations."

Presumably, or probably, we are talking about the same problem. But even after rereading, I have difficulty interpreting and understanding the last sentence in the paragraph just quoted.

It would seem that for the success of Mensah's scheme (which I am [redacted] here seconding) one must draw a line across these territories and redefine the Africa of the proposal as the part of Africa north of that line while providing sufficient guarantees against aggression from outside this redefined Africa. It seems unlikely that the states just mentioned would participate in this proposal.*

It is important that such a proposal be developed in all its details, as well as sponsored and announced by a suitable group of African states. The organization of African Union (OAU), recently formed in Addis Ababa certainly is organized enough to do such a job.

The probability of success of such a proposal is low. This point was made earlier, but it must be remembered that the a priori probability of adoption was low on even those few arms control proposals that have been adopted.

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*In Mensah's original paper (Ref. 1) there was no mention of South Africa. But in the version published as Ref. 2, he adds the following (pp 180-181): "A further complicating factor is the relations between African countries on the one hand and some non-African countries and South Africa on the other. Although the argument advanced in this paper is that African countries must reduce their military expenditures to a minimum, it is entirely possible that they will collectively decide to maintain a level of armed force capable of matching the arms build-up in South Africa, which is unlikely to be a participant in an African disarmament system. In that case, as was suggested above for forces required for service with the United Nations, etc., it ought to be so arranged that such forces should not be available for any independent purposes of the nations. For otherwise every country would have to include all the military forces standing in a neighbouring country in assessing its potential military dangers and the state of mutual armed vigilance would be maintained with something near the present level of armaments."

The "solution" proposed in this paragraph is probably unworkable, for it requires that the several African states maintain forces, but that these forces "be unavailable for any independent purposes of the nations." Such an arrangement may be conceivable for forces required for service with the UN, because these have, to date, been lightly armed. But for genuine and fully-equipped military forces, such as envisioned by Mensah, above, the problem of "unavailability" is extremely difficult.

Strong objections to such a proposal will be made by those who object to stability, because they may have a vested interest in instability; objections will come from those Africans who prefer the role of a prize between East and West, who prefer to be wooed by suitors from both East and West, who calculate (and not entirely erroneously) that the amount of foreign aid they receive from East and West is maximized as long as the Cold War is on.

Africa has an opportunity to help lead the way for the giants who are deadlocked and weary.

I do not pretend that this idea is a product of detailed research. It is not. I suggest only that African disarmament is an interesting idea which could be discussed and developed. Such a proposal could be a contribution to peace; we surely have no surplus of such contributions.

REFERENCES

1. Mensah, J.H., "Disarmament and Africa's Economic Development" Document AA/3/7 of the Accra Assembly, Accra, Ghana, June 21-28, 1962.

Mensah is Principal Economic Officer in the office of the Planning Commission of Ghana. Reference (2) adds the following biographical information: J.H. Mensah...is decended from the commanders of Ashanti's formidable armies. After attending the University College of the Gold Coast (now the University of Ghana), the London School of Economics, and Stanford University...he joined the United Nations Secretariat as a research economist... As Executive Secretary of Ghana's Planning Commission since 1961, he has been preparing a new Seven Year Development Plan.....

2. Mensah's paper (Ref. 1) is reprinted, with some deletions and some additions, as:
Mensah, J.H., "Regional Disarmament: Africa", Disarmament and Arms Control, vol. 1, no. 2, Autumn 1963, pp. 171-183.

3. The following is a quick guide to, and current review of the various African groupings and intra-African problems: Sanger, Clyde, "Toward Unity in Africa", Foreign Affairs, vol. 42, no. 2, Jan. 1964, pp. 269-281.

4. Others as inexpert as I am on Africa--and probably many considerably more expert--will find the following book useful: Lasky, Melvin J., Africa for Beginners, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1962.