

No. 58/3

EXCHANGE OF CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN
MR. N. KHRUSHCHEV, CHAIRMAN OF THE
COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF THE U.S.S.R.,
AND PRIME MINISTER JOHN G. DIEFENBAKER.
(LETTERS OF APRIL 4 AND MAY 9, 1958)

Moscow
April 14, 1958.

Dear Prime Minister:

One of the most urgent questions of the international relations of our day and one which causes an especially profound concern to millions of people in all countries throughout the world is the need for the immediate cessation of tests of atomic and hydrogen weapons of various kinds. It is not difficult to understand the deep anxiety which the continuation of experimental explosions of nuclear weapons arouses among all the strata of population, from political figures, experts and scientists to simple folk, ordinary workers of cities and villages, and mothers of families. It is these tests which accelerate the arms race, which facilitate the development of new destructive and lethal kinds of nuclear weapons, and which thus increase all the more the threat of an atomic war which hangs over mankind.

Moreover, even now, in time of peace, systematic experimental explosions of atomic and hydrogen weapons cause harm to the health of peaceful, unsuspecting, innocent people of different countries. In the petition signed by 9,235 scientists of 44 countries and submitted in January 1958 to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, it states that each test explosion of a nuclear bomb increases the radioactive fall-out, thus causing harm to the health of people all over the world and jeopardizing the normal development of future generations.

Taking all this into account the Soviet Government has come to the conclusion that it is not possible to delay the solution of the problem of ending nuclear weapon tests any longer since irreparable damage to the health of the people cannot be permitted.

As of today only three powers--the U.S.S.R., the United States and Great Britain--possess nuclear weapons and it would therefore be comparatively easy to reach an agreement for ending nuclear weapon tests. Unless tests are ended now other countries can come in time to possess nuclear weapons and in such circumstances it will, of course, be more difficult to reach an agreement on the cessation of tests.

For the past three years the Soviet Government have repeatedly approached the Governments of the United States and Great Britain with the proposal to end atomic and hydrogen weapon tests. Since the Government of the United States as well as the Government of Great Britain did not wish to agree to the cessation of nuclear tests without a time-limit, the Soviet side put forward a proposal, as a beginning, to stop these test at least for a limited period, for instance two to three years. The proposals of the U.S.S.R. on this question provide for the establishment of necessary international control over the cessation of tests.