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LETTER TO KHRUSHCHOV

A letter from Prime Minister Diefenbaker, in reply to a message dated June 27, 1960, from Premier Khrushchov of the U.S.S.R. concerning the breakdown of disarmament talks at Geneva a few days earlier.

"OTTAWA, June 30, 1960.

His Excellency Nikita S. Khrushchov,
Chairman of the Council of Ministers,
The Kremlin,
MOSCOW, U.S.S.R.

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I have received your letter of June 27 announcing the decision of your Government to discontinue its participation in the work of the Ten Nation Disarmament Committee. The action of the Soviet Delegation and the delegations of Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Roumania in leaving the Committee without warning gives cause for serious regret and concern. I find these developments deeply disquieting.

At the outset, let me dispose of the charges you level at the positions taken by the Western delegations, particularly by the Canadian representative. Your remarks seem to me not so much concerned with the conduct of the negotiations as with the aim of creating differences among the Western delegations.

If your allegations against the Canadian Government are seriously meant, they constitute a transparent misrepresentation of Canada's position. The Canadian Government has throughout adopted in the Ten Nation Committee a strong and independent stand in support of balanced concessions leading towards agreement. Furthermore, despite all setbacks we have not ceased to advocate in other fields the continuance of a policy of negotiation with a view to the restoration of mutual confidence between the Soviet and Western worlds.

The seriousness of the Canadian Government's interest and purpose in embarking on the disarmament negotiations has been amply demonstrated. On a number of occasions, most recently on June 24, the Canadian Delegation made detailed suggestions designed to bring the Ten Nation Committee to grips with the task of real negotiation. Unfortunately, the Soviet Union and its allies did not respond to these suggestions or to a number of other Western proposals to move towards specific measures of disarmament.

Indeed I find it difficult to understand the logic of your Government's action in discontinuing these important talks at this juncture. At the time of the failure of the Summit meeting, the Canadian Government took the view that all the other East-West negotiations then proceeding automatically assumed greater importance, since they constituted a useful means through which the deterioration of international relations could be checked. In the view of the Canadian Government the situation demanded that the members of the Committee put behind them the opening phases of the negotiations and proceed immediately with their task.