

External Affairs  
Supplementary Paper

No. 58/1 Exchange of Correspondence between Mr. N.A. Bulganin, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R., and Prime Minister John G. Diefenbaker. (Letters of December 13 and January 18)

December 13, 1957.

Dear Prime Minister,

The Soviet Government is deeply worried with the present state of international relations. That is why I am addressing this letter to you in order to share with you our considerations concerning the causes of the further increase in international tension and those possible measures which, we believe, should be taken toward the normalization of the international situation and the creating of the necessary confidence in relations between states.

The recent activities of the North Atlantic Alliance (NATO) have convinced us that measures are being taken, on the initiative of the USA and Great Britain, to sharply increase military preparations, to prepare for nuclear war. At the recent meeting in Washington the heads of the governments of those powers have taken a decision for the re-organization of the NATO system aimed at mobilizing all military, economic, and scientific resources of the members of NATO for a further arms race including the production on a large scale of the newest kinds of death-dealing nuclear and missile weapons.

As is seen from the statements of leading political and military persons in the countries belonging to the North Atlantic Alliance, a session of the NATO Council, which will soon open in Paris, will occupy itself with working out new strategic plans of the Western powers which would provide for the broad use of atomic and hydrogen weapons. It is also intended that the territories of a number of NATO countries will be used for storing American nuclear weapons and for building rocket-launching bases. The sponsors of these plans of NATO and, first of all, those influential circles which seek to aggravate the international situation, speak openly of their intention to secure at the coming session of NATO a further strengthening in the military-industrial potential of Western Germany. In practice this will mean an increase in the militarization of Western Germany.

The adoption of these decisions would inevitably lead to a further increase of tension in relations among countries, to a further aggravation of the international situation, to an unrestrained arms race, to an intensification of the "cold war", to a condition when efforts would be made to have the world on "the brink of war" not occasionally but constantly.

There are reports that the question of storing American atomic and hydrogen weapons on Canadian territory and of creating bases on this territory for launching rockets with hydrogen warheads is being discussed intensively at the present time. It is not difficult to realize that under conditions when, for a long time now, it has been permissible

to build American military bases on Canadian territory, and when the process of merging the military forces of Canada and the USA is in fact being carried out, the storing on the country's territory of American atomic and hydrogen weapons creates a special danger for Canada in case of a military conflict. And indeed, in the present age of rocketry and atomic weapons is it realistic to think that if an aggressor uses military bases on foreign territories for an atomic attack the countries which provided these bases could escape a retaliatory atomic strike with its destructive consequences?

It is evidently for the purpose of quieting the peoples of NATO countries, who are alarmed with the perspective of storing American nuclear weapons on the territories of their countries, that the military leaders in the West are intensely spreading theories about the possibility of so-called "local" or "small" wars. Such assertions about the possibility of localizing conflicts are only attempts to mislead the peoples and to lull their vigilance. If, in our times, in the past, local incidents grew, as history teaches us, into wide military conflicts and world wars any so-called local military conflict becomes all the more dangerous at the present period when there are two opposing military blocs and when there exist such means of waging war that no country belonging to these blocs can remain outside the area of military actions.

Reports of the intention of the Western powers to unite in one or another form such existing blocs as NATO, SEATO, and the Baghdad Pact, did not pass unnoticed also. I am not going to conceal, Mr. Prime Minister, that the Soviet Government considers these plans as contrary to the idea of strengthening world peace and security; that is, as contrary to the aims which the Organization of the United Nations was created to fulfill. The participants of such a united military-political bloc, established with the aim of preparing war, would have had certain political and military obligations beforehand and would come forward as a power counter-posing the United Nations and its principles which are based on the acknowledged universal character of this international organization. If the situation is to be judged objectively then it should be acknowledged that the carrying out of such a plan would weaken the foundations of the U.N. and would inflict serious damage to the cause of peace.

Moreover, the participants of such a bloc would be in danger of being drawn into military adventures themselves which, of course, is contrary to their interests.

The Government of the United States being anxious to merge and to centralize the military power of the NATO countries put forward, together with the Government of Great Britain, the so-called doctrine of the "inter-dependence" of the NATO countries. It is not an accident that this doctrine was met uneasily by the countries of the North Atlantic Alliance as it involves a serious danger to their sovereign rights.

Attention is being drawn to the fact that all these military preparations in the NATO countries are being carried out in an atmosphere of artificially fanned military hysteria in the Western countries, in an atmosphere where the fatal inevitability of war is propagated and where people are intimidated by an imaginary threat on the part of the USSR. At the same time, in order to increase hostile propaganda toward the Soviet Union, attempts are made to present as a menace to peace even the latest achievement of Soviet science - the launching of the artificial earth satellites.

At the same time, purposely, nothing is said about the fact that it was the Soviet Union which has repeatedly and persistently stood, and stands, for co-operation and peaceful coexistence, for outlawing all kinds of nuclear weapons, for ending their production, and for destroying the existing stocks of atomic and hydrogen bombs as well as rockets with nuclear charges of all ranges, including the intercontinental type. Great efforts are also being made to keep quiet about the fact that the Soviet Government, expressing the will of the peoples of the USSR, has stated solemnly that it has no intention of using any means of destruction if the Soviet Union is not attacked. It is also well known that the Soviet Union has never threatened, and does not threaten, the security of other states. Our country, as was stated many times, will never start a war against any country because war is foreign to the very nature of the Soviet state.

Despite the policy of peace and international co-operation which is persistently pursued by the Soviet Union and by the other Socialist states, the governments of the Western countries at the present time are adopting decisions aimed at continuing and increasing the policy "from positions of strength" and the "cold war" which is fraught with the most dangerous consequences. It is quite evident that the further stock-piling of atomic, hydrogen, and rocket weapons will increase the threat of a new war more and more.

Realizing the danger of the present situation and the fact that it may deteriorate further because of the plans for the preparation of a new war which are being drawn up by the NATO leaders, political and public men adhering to various political views, religious convictions, and philosophic schools, hundreds of millions of peoples in all countries of the world, persistently demand that an end be put to the arms race, that the policy of the "cold war" be done away with and, before it is too late, that the path of peaceful coexistence be entered upon, as only this path answers the requirements of the present moment in the life of mankind and can ensure the preservation of peace.

The Soviet Government proceeds from the fact that in the present situation the vital interests of the peoples demand the acceptance of all states of the principles of peaceful coexistence, mutual respect of territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-aggression, full equality and non-interference in the internal affairs of each other, equal rights and reciprocal benefits, a peaceful solution of the problems and differences which may arise. We are firmly convinced that if, in their foreign policy, all states would be guided by the main principle - the necessity of preserving and consolidating peace - and would not try to undertake any actions which could lead to increasing the military danger then it would be possible to make a turn toward improving the entire international atmosphere and toward creating the necessary conditions for a peaceful settlement of outstanding international issues.

If one proceeds from the interests of ensuring universal peace it is necessary, in our opinion, to recognize, unreservedly, the situation in the world when there are capitalist states and socialist states.

We, all of us, cannot but take into account that any attempts to change this situation by force from outside, to violate the present "status quo", to impose any territorial changes, would lead to catastrophic consequences.

We realize, of course, that the establishment of relations of real trust between states requires great effort and persistence on the part of governments. Keeping in mind the fact that certain international problems, the disarmament problem among them, are so complicated that, as experience shows, they could not be settled at once, the Soviet Government proposes to solve these problems gradually, step by step.

The Soviet Government believes that the Governments of the USA and Great Britain together with the Government of the Soviet Union ought to assume an obligation not to use atomic and hydrogen weapons and to stop immediately, beginning from the 1st of January 1958, the testing of all kinds of nuclear weapons, at least for the term of two or three years at first. This would substantially improve the international atmosphere; it would contribute to the establishment of trust between the states.

The relinquishing by the great powers of the stock-piling of any kinds of nuclear weapons on foreign territories, including, of course, the territory of Canada, would be of great importance in the present situation. The Soviet Government proposes to the USA and Great Britain to agree right now not to stock-pile nuclear weapons of any kinds on the territories of Western and Eastern Germany. If this agreement were to be supplemented with an agreement between the FRG and the GDR not to produce nuclear weapons and not to stock-pile such weapons in Germany then the governments of Poland and Czechoslovakia, as has already been officially stated by them, would not produce and stock-pile nuclear weapons on their territories. Therefore, a vast zone with a population of more than one hundred million people would be excluded from the sphere of atomic armaments, a zone where the risk of atomic war would be reduced to a minimum would appear in Central Europe.

Steps ought to be taken toward concluding, in one or another form, an agreement on non-aggression between the states adhering to the North Atlantic Alliance and the states who are members of the Warsaw Treaty.

The Soviet Government holds that in order to normalize the situation in the Near and Middle East it is necessary that the great powers - the USSR, the USA, Great Britain, and France - should take upon themselves the obligation to strictly observe the principles of non-interference in the affairs of the countries in this region and to abandon the use of force for the solution of questions connected with the Near and Middle East.

We stand for taking measures toward the cessation of the propaganda in the press and by the radio which arouse feelings of distrust and hostility.

It is the opinion of the Soviet Government that by all these measures - which, as is known, are consistently supported not only by the USSR, but also by the Chinese People's Republic as well as by many other states of Europe, Asia, and other continents - it would be possible to secure the ending of the "cold war" which, in its turn, would enable a start to be made on the implementation of such important steps as: a substantial reduction of the armed forces and armaments of the states; the complete prohibition of nuclear weapons of the cessation of their production and the liquidation of their stocks; the elimination of foreign military bases on the territory of other countries and the withdrawal of foreign

armed forces from the territories of all states - the participants of NATO and the Warsaw Treaty; the replacement of the existing military groupings of the powers with a system of collective security in Europe and Asia.

Taking into account the positive experience of the heads of the Four Great Powers' Conference held in Geneva in the summer of 1955, a meeting of representatives of capitalist and socialist countries on a high level could have great significance. In such a case all the participants of the meeting should, of course, have in view the real situation and sincerely strive toward achieving the necessary agreement.

I should like, Mr. Prime Minister, to draw your attention to the essential importance of the attitude of all states, big and small alike, with regard to the question of preserving peace and easing international tension. The peace-loving independent foreign policy followed by any state not only answers the interest of its people but it also exerts a stabilizing influence on the situation in the area where this state is situated as well as on the international situation as a whole.

We are firmly convinced that Canada, considering her wide international ties, could contribute toward achieving agreement on these proposals of the Soviet Government.

I have to tell you openly, Mr. Prime Minister, that the statement of Dr. Sydney E. Smith, Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs, in the House of Commons on the 3rd of December of this year to the effect that there is in Canada "an intense desire to reduce tensions between the West and the USSR" and that "Canada's views would not be identical with some of the attitudes we have found in other countries which belong to NATO - a complete denial as soon as a proposal is put forward", did not pass unnoticed in the Soviet Union.

Canada, as a country which is one of the main suppliers of fissionable materials in the world, could play an important role in solving the atomic problem, in achieving an agreement on using atomic energy for peaceful purposes only.

The Soviet Government has always stood, and stands, for the broadest possible development of ties between our countries. I think you will agree with me that the similarity in the geographic, and climatic conditions of the Soviet Union and Canada, the abundance of natural resources in both countries, create favourable objective conditions for a wide extension of all-round ties between our two countries.

We are convinced that both parties would benefit from the development of normal trade without any artificially imposed restrictions whatsoever. This undoubtedly would contribute to establishing relations of trust and goodwill between the Soviet Union and Canada.

To the same extent we stand for the all-round development of co-operation between the USSR and Canada in the field of science and technology, culture and art, education and health, for wider sports contacts. Therefore we met with understanding the recent statement in the Canadian Parliament by Dr. Sidney E. Smith your Secretary of State for External Affairs, concerning the intention of Canada to extend ties and contacts with the Soviet Union. In particular we are prepared to receive in the Soviet Union a reciprocal visit of a Canadian trade mission at a time suitable for the Government of Canada in accordance with a wish expressed in Dr. Smith's statement.

It is our firm conviction that neighbours should live in good neighbourliness and that with a mutual desire, it is fully possible to achieve this.

We hope, Mr. Prime Minister, that the considerations expressed in this letter will be attentively examined by you and your colleagues in the Government. We, on our part, are prepared to examine any considerations which the Government of Canada may wish to put forward with the aim of improving the international situation as a whole as well as for bettering direct relations between our countries.

With sincere respects,

N. Bulganin

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Ottawa,

January 18, 1958.

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Government of Canada has given thoughtful attention to the contents of your letter of December 13, 1957 in which you set forth your views on the causes of international tension and offer a number of proposals for the easing of the international situation and for the development of confidence between states.

You deal at length in your letter with the activities of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and you allege that measures are being taken by that organization to prepare for nuclear war and that an artificially fanned military hysteria is propagated in Western countries. It is also suggested that current NATO policies will lead to the intensification of the cold war. I do not wish to engage in extended arguments over NATO policies since the purely defensive nature of NATO has been made clear on many occasions. These charges cannot go entirely unanswered, however, and the Canadian Government wishes to emphasize that the organization has no aggressive intentions whatsoever. If it had, Canada would dissociate itself from it immediately, since such intentions would be neither in the letter nor the spirit of the North Atlantic Treaty. As your letter arrived shortly before the NATO Council meeting in which heads of government participated, I am sure that you have given careful attention to the Declaration and Communiqué issued at the conclusion of the session. In my opinion, the Declaration and Communiqué comprise an adequate response to the various accusations which you have made against the North Atlantic Alliance.

Perhaps it may be helpful in understanding our position if I supplement these NATO documents with an outline of the Canadian attitude towards NATO. As I said in the House of Commons on December 21 last the recent NATO meeting has made a substantial contribution to the cause of peace, not only by reaffirming the purely defensive character of the Alliance, but by leaving the door open to meaningful disarmament negotiations. I pointed out in regard to the NATO heads of

government meeting that I have never seen a group of men less actuated by any other purpose than that of achieving peace. I emphasized that the NATO governments were prepared, in the realization of the awful realities which face us, to go as far as possible to bring about a climate and atmosphere which will ensure the laying of a foundation for international peace.

You will see from this, Mr. Chairman, that the question of disarmament looms very large in our minds and that we view with deep concern the unwillingness of the U.S.S.R. to participate further in the disarmament discussions which seemed to show some promise of success in the middle of last year. We welcome your advocacy of step-by-step progress but surely the first step is for the countries concerned to resume their discussions and to make use of the United Nations machinery created for the purpose.

One of your main proposals is that an obligation be adopted by the nations possessing nuclear weapons not to use these weapons and to cease the testing of nuclear weapons at a given date. We should point out that some time ago the U.S.S.R. did accept the principle, in the course of discussion in the Disarmament Sub-committee, that an obligation not to use nuclear weapons might be subject to the condition that they could be used for purposes of defence against aggression. This is a factor which certainly could be pursued further if disarmament talks were resumed. In general, we shall continue to advocate the proposals which we supported at the recent session of the UN Assembly. I would like, furthermore, to draw your attention to the flexible approach adopted in the NATO Communiqué that was designed to facilitate the reopening of discussions at an early date.

Rather than debate again the major issues on which our points of view diverge, I think it might be useful in this letter to concentrate on matters of particular concern or interest to Canada. Thus in reference to NATO policies, you refer to the existence of United States bases on Canadian soil. Canada has every right to take measures of self-defence and any actions it takes in this regard come within the provisions of the UN Charter. Our defence measures - whether taken alone or in concert with friendly countries - result from a conviction that such measures are necessary. Our readiness to bring about conditions in which the need for defence measures will be lessened was shown last summer when I gave assurance that in the context of a disarmament agreement the Canadian Government would be willing to open all or part of Canada to aerial and ground inspection on a basis of reciprocity. It seems to me that this is the type of proposal which should prove attractive to both our countries since we are neighbours across the Arctic. I have in mind in particular the kind of proposal Canada joined in sponsoring last August involving a system of inspection in the Arctic regions. We were willing then and are willing now to take such action in order to provide assurance against the fear of surprise attack.

Perhaps not unrelated to this is your assertion that attempts to alter the status quo by force would have catastrophic consequences. Without equivocation we assert that Canada rejects any attempt to impose territorial changes by force. It is not clear what comes within your definition of status quo, and this is something on which more information would be welcome. The Canadian Government continues to be concerned about the domination exercised by the U.S.S.R. over Eastern European

countries and the Soviet zone of Germany. You speak of co-existence, but if this concept means recognition of the existence side by side of capitalist and communist countries, it must also imply non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries including those of Eastern Europe. The events in Hungary of 1956 have not faded from our minds.

The idea of the status quo is extended in your letter to cover the Middle East. I would like to emphasize that Canada is making a positive contribution to stability and peace through its participation in the United Nations Emergency Force. We hope that no power, including the U.S.S.R., will take any step which would interfere with the important duties which the United Nations Emergency Force is now performing with such a gratifying degree of success.

As a member of the Disarmament Commission and Sub-committee of the United Nations, we are studying the comments which you made on a proposal put forward earlier by Poland for the creation of a zone in central Europe free of nuclear armaments. The NATO Communiqué pointed out that we are prepared to examine any proposal, from whatever source, for general or partial disarmament and we therefore intend to join with our NATO allies in looking into the implications of this type of proposal. One factor in considering such proposals would be the readiness of the participants to undertake an adequate system of inspection and control.

Your suggestion that a meeting of representatives at a high level could usefully be held would receive my immediate support if there were adequate assurance that beneficial results could be expected. Past experience has shown, however, that such meetings if they are to be fruitful must be carefully prepared through diplomatic and other channels. I am sure that you will agree that a meeting of this kind which did not lead to positive agreement on at least some of the basic issues with which we are confronted might result in a public reaction more likely to heighten than lessen world tension. In order not to disappoint public opinion in our respective countries we must therefore, I submit, make sure that such a meeting be prepared in advance with the utmost care. You may be aware that there has been a suggestion in the Canadian House of Commons that the Government might invite the participants in such a meeting to consider holding it in Canada. This suggestion was undoubtedly prompted by the consideration that Canada is the next-door neighbour of the United States and the U.S.S.R. and has a special relationship to Commonwealth countries and to France. I can assure you, Mr. Chairman, that when the participants decide that they are ready to call such a meeting and should they decide to hold it in Canada, they will be welcome.

With your final assertion, Mr. Chairman - that neighbours should live in a spirit of good neighbourliness - there can, of course, be no disagreement. We have been living in a state of warm friendship with our great neighbour to the south for generations and we would hope to develop similar friendly relations with our neighbour to the north. As is well known to you, the exchange of visits and information between Canada and the U.S.S.R. over the past several years has increased considerably. Our countries have explored a wide range of exchanges in the technical, scientific, cultural and commercial fields and a number of these have been implemented. We welcomed the recent visit of a trade group from the U.S.S.R. We hope that there can be an



expansion of the exchange of goods between our two countries in keeping with the spirit of the trade agreement which was signed in 1956. In due course Canadian businessmen may decide to pay a visit to the U.S.S.R. in order to explore further the possibilities of trade between our countries. I can assure you that the Canadian Government would be willing to be associated with such an undertaking. We were pleased at the goodwill that was engendered by the visit of the Russian hockey team which toured Canada this winter and we have been happy to learn that performances by Canadian artists in the U.S.S.R. have earned widespread acclaim. We shall certainly continue to give close attention to the development of good relations in these various fields. We would welcome a sign of willingness on the part of the Soviet authorities to permit freedom of movement for those persons who wish to leave the U.S.S.R. and join relatives in Canada as well as for any persons in the U.S.S.R. who hold Canadian citizenship.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I am sure that the people of the Soviet Union share in their hearts the aspirations of the Canadian people in wanting to live in peace and security and in desiring to be free to pursue their individual and national development, unhampered by the burden of armaments and untroubled by suspicions and fears. May I urge that we all work towards the achievement of a state of affairs in which these aspirations can be realized.

Since giving consideration to your letter I have received your further letter of January 8, 1958 which was handed to me by your Ambassador on January 10; it also will be studied carefully and replied to in due course.

Yours sincerely,

John G. Diefenbaker



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