

No. 58/5

TEXT OF LETTER FROM MR. KHRUSHCHEV  
TO MR. DIEFENBAKER DATED MAY 30, 1958  
AND DELIVERED TO THE PRIME MINISTER BY  
THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR ON MAY 31, 1958.  
THIS WAS IN RESPONSE TO MR. DIEFENBAKER'S  
LETTER OF MAY 9, 1958 SENT IN REPLY TO MR.  
KHRUSHCHEV'S MESSAGE DATED APRIL 4, 1958.

Moscow  
May 30, 1958.

Dear Mr. Prime Minister,

After careful study of your letter I cannot help coming to the conclusion that the questions raised in it evidently need further elucidation, and, what is most important, that a desire is expressed in your letter to contribute toward the finding of ways to an agreement between the states concerned on the urgent problems, upon the solution of which depend the destinies of the world. Even this alone is a good sign, since this distinguishes your approach to the analysis of problems, which have long caused profound concern to peoples, from the usually prejudiced approach which is expressed in the constant refusal to embark on the path of honest negotiations with the Soviet Union and in the constant, negative attitude towards its proposals which we aimed at consolidating peace between peoples.

Taking all this into account I express my readiness to continue an exchange of views and willingly to answer the questions which interest you. If this exchange of views helps in any degree to recognize the need to find ways for saving mankind from the oppressive threat of a new war, and helps to draw together the positions of the powers on outstanding international problems, then I think there will be a reason to believe that this exchange of opinions was useful.

The Soviet Government has met with full understanding the thought expressed in your letter that governments, whether or not they dispose of the nuclear weapon now, have the right, indeed the duty, to work unceasingly for peace. These words of yours, in which a legitimate anxiety for the destinies of the world is evident, as well as your statement to the effect that the question of nuclear weapons tests is of grave concern to the Canadian Government, show that, provided there is the desire, a common language could be found on such a problem of great concern to peoples as the general cessation of tests of atomic and hydrogen weapons.

It seems to us that, in spite of a number of reservations which cannot be shared by us, the attitude of the Government of which you are the head toward this problem coincides in many respects with that of the Soviet Union, the aim of which is the unilateral renunciation of further tests of atomic and hydrogen weapons.

If the reservations and doubts expressed in your letter are to be touched upon, it is difficult to avoid an impression that they are engendered in the last analysis by that distrust towards the Soviet Union which is being constantly cultivated in the organization of the North Atlantic

Treaty. For instance, your letter presents the matter in such a way as to imply that the actions of the Soviet Government against peace-endangering flights of American aircraft with atomic and hydrogen bombs to the borders of the Soviet Union somehow reduce the meaningfulness of its decision to stop the testing of all types of nuclear weapons from the spring of 1958.

Ignoring for the moment the fact that such argumentation admits a great deal of artificiality, since it treats as similar actions which are utterly different in nature, such as the cessation of nuclear weapon tests and the clearly provocative practice of American strategic aviation, the very appraisal of the conduct of the USA Government in this matter is extremely one-sided.

You must admit that such flights by American bombers cannot be justified in any way, as there are absolutely no actions on the part of the Soviet Union which could be considered by anybody as threatening to the security of the United States of America or of any other state.

Has the Soviet Union sent its air force to the borders of the USA or Canada or of any other country with a load of atomic and hydrogen bombs, as is done by the USA, or has it even threatened to take such action? Or perhaps the Soviet Union threatens someone with its navy following the example of certain other powers? You are well aware that there neither has been nor is anything like this. Such actions are alien to us and to our policy.

On the other hand, how can it fail to be seen that the provocative actions of the USA, which are inadmissible in time of peace, directly affect the security of the USSR and can at any moment unleash a nuclear-rocket war even by accident or miscalculation, to which I have already drawn the attention of Mr. Eisenhower, President of the USA?

Would the reaction of the Canadian Government and people be different if the Soviet Union took steps similar to those which the American military command permits itself, and began to carry out flights of its bombers with atomic and nuclear bombs to the frontiers of Canada? It would hardly be different.

It would seem that the leading statesmen of Canada, over the territory of whom American bombers are making flights with atomic and hydrogen bombs, and on which bases and facilities for the servicing of these aircraft are situated, should not be indifferent to these flights which also constitute, if the facts are to be faced, a grave danger for Canada itself. If in the past there were quite a few occasions when countries were drawn into wars contrary to their wishes and intentions, this danger has increased a hundred times in our times. It is possible that you will deny the truthfulness of this statement, indeed you will probably deny this, referring to the good intentions of your people and of your Government. I am not going to question the sincerity of your arguments. But, Mr. Prime Minister, the logic of things can prove to be stronger than human logic, even if the latter is backed by the best motives.

When the destiny and security of one country or another is actually made dependent upon those forces which

are out of its control, and in reality a blind chance that can push the world into the abyss of a new war, then, irrespective of the intentions of either side, it is necessary to reckon with the grave danger of war. That is why we say and will continue to say that to take a light approach to actions from which there could be only one step to a fearful tragedy, is to take upon oneself a heavy responsibility before one's people, before the world, before history. We state with profound regret that the Government of Canada has not refrained from sharing with the Government of the USA to a certain degree the responsibility for such flights, as may be seen in the recent signing of an agreement between the USA and Canada on the unification of the command of the air forces of both countries.

The essence of the danger which has arisen for the cause of peace lies by no means in the absence of inspection in the Arctic, which is mentioned in your letter, but exclusively in the above-mentioned flights of American bombers to the borders of the USSR. Only one thing is required to eliminate this danger - the cessation of such action on the part of the USA. But it is this very thing that is evidently not desired by the USA Government which tries to substitute the question of establishing inspection in the Arctic for the question of the immediate cessation of flights by its bombers. The proposal of the Government of the USA is by no means aimed at removing the tense situation in the Arctic region, despite all the fuss about it made by those who advocate balancing "on the brink of war" and who advocate military preparations by NATO; it is primarily concerned with obtaining military-strategic advantages for the USA to the detriment of the security of the Soviet Union.

Judge for yourself, the Government of the USA, in putting forward a proposal about establishing inspection in the Arctic, does not even promise to stop completely the flights of bombers with atomic and hydrogen bombs towards the Soviet Union. Moreover this proposal relates to only one sector of the borders of the Soviet Union, and other areas, from which an attack can be made on the USSR, and where American air bases are located, are ignored.

Nobody will deny that there are many American military bases in the countries of Europe, Africa and other areas, which are aimed against the USSR and other peace-loving states, and which can also be used for an attack against our country. Could the Soviet Union under such conditions take any steps which would disarm it in the face of the danger of an attack, and which would reduce its capability to strike back in self-defence, and only in self-defence? To expect this from us means to expect too much.

In connection with what you say in favour of applying aerial inspection to prevent a sudden attack, I would like to remind you that the Soviet Government, meeting the wishes of the Western powers, already proposed last year the establishment of zones of aerial inspection in Central Europe, as well as in the Far East, and in the corresponding part of the USA. This Soviet proposal which takes equally into account the security interests of all parties concerned remains in force, but such a decision to all appearances does not suit the Government of the USA. Since this proposal has not met with a positive attitude on the part of the USA, we cannot regard the American proposal on aerial

inspection in the Arctic regions as other than a deliberate attempt to divert public opinion from the threat to peace which is created by the provocative actions of the air force of the USA.

The statesmen of the USA declare that the American air force will as before make flights to the Soviet borders, that is, will continue to play with fire, because the USSR does not comply with their demands about control in the Arctic region. In other words, there is an attempt to exert pressure on the Soviet Union in order to thrust upon it plans which are contrary to the interests of its security and advantageous to only one side - the USA. With regard to the Soviet Union such attempts are, of course, hopeless. If those who resort to them took into account at least the lessons of history they would probably have long since come to the conclusion that this method should be discarded, and that it was necessary to consider both the security interests of the USA and those of the Soviet Union. We call on the USA and the other members of NATO to adopt this approach, the only one which is sound.

If the Soviet Union resorted to the methods used by the USA it would have to act approximately as follows: since the USA did not agree to its proposal about means of preventing surprise attack by one state on another, in particular to its proposal about setting up two zones of aerial inspection, of which one was to embrace the Eastern part of the USSR and the Western part of the USA, then Soviet bombers with hydrogen bombs should be sent to the borders of the USA. You can hardly deny, Mr. Prime Minister, that in such a case there would be a complete similarity with the present actions of the USA.

What would be the attitude in the USA towards such action, as well as the attitude of those who advocate the above-mentioned American proposal? There is no reason to doubt that these activities would have been met with a negative reaction.

I will tell you frankly that in our opinion, no one of the steps on the part of the USA as well as of the other members of NATO, has exposed with such profoundness the perversity of these countries on the crucial problems of reducing international tension and ending the "cold war" as has the moving of a proposal on inspection in the Arctic region. The putting forward of this proposal indicates how remote the intentions of its sponsors are from the genuine desire to reduce the danger of a surprise attack and to eliminate the danger of war.

Now let us return to the problem of the cessation of nuclear weapons tests. It goes without saying that nobody will object that an international agreement on ending such tests is more desirable than a decision adopted by one side. But the insufficiency of such a decision lies not in the fact that it is, as you note, of a conditional character, that it could be revoked if necessary, but in the fact that the two other powers possessing nuclear weapons - the USA and Great Britain - refuse to end their tests, both unilaterally and under an agreement. The unilateral cessation of tests will remain unilateral until all the powers disposing of the nuclear weapon stop testing it. And when

they all end these tests, permanently and for all time, then the result of such action will be the same as if these were taken on the basis of an agreement. Common sense urges the need to assist in the achievement of this goal.

We have repeatedly emphasized that if anyone were to be put at a disadvantage by the general cessation of nuclear weapon tests at the present time, it would be the Soviet Union, which has taken this step although it has carried out fewer test explosions than the USA and Great Britain, a fact which puts it into an unequal position in comparison with these two powers, especially as they continue such tests.

If there does not exist up to now an international agreement on the cessation of nuclear tests this is contrary to the desire of the Soviet Union. Only one thing is necessary to reach an agreement binding all parties - the agreement of the Governments of the USA and Great Britain to cease carrying out experimental nuclear explosions.

In your letter you ask for clarification of the attitude of the Soviet Government with regard to the establishment of a control system for the verification of nuclear tests. You know that in due course the Soviet Union put forward proposals concerning the establishment of control posts on the territories of the USSR, USA, Great Britain and in the area of the Pacific Ocean, designed at supervising the implementation of an agreement on the cessation of nuclear tests. We agreed to this though it is definitely known that national scientific institutions are able even without these posts to register any nuclear explosion wherever it is carried out on the globe. We are prepared to discuss with the powers concerned everything that pertains to this problem - the number of such posts, their exact distribution on the territories of countries, and other matters. Our appeals for this, however, have so far brought few results, except for an agreement in principle on the part of the Government of the USA for discussions of the problem of control for the detection of nuclear weapons tests between the experts of the corresponding countries.

The Soviet Government agrees to appoint special experts to study the technical details pertaining to control over the cessation of nuclear tests, though in its opinion it was necessary first of all to agree in principle to stop such tests and then to work out common measures on control. Considering, however, that the Governments of some western powers regard the preliminary work of experts as useful, the Soviet Government has expressed its readiness to try that way as well.

We, of course, cannot forget the bitter experience inherent in the fact that negotiations, which have been carried on for many years in organs of the UN on disarmament, and in which both of our Governments have participated, have been reduced in fact to endless discussions on forms of control over commitments which have not yet been undertaken by Governments and which, as is now clear, neither the USA nor the other Western Powers have been ready to assume. Naturally, everything must be done to prevent the repetition

of such an abnormal situation during the meetings of technical experts on the problems of control over the cessation of experimental explosions. That is why we consider that their work must be finished in the shortest term agreed upon beforehand. I take the liberty of expressing the hope that this point of view will also be met with understanding on the part of the Government of Canada.

I shall not conceal, Mr. Prime Minister, that we had expected to find in your reply confirmation that the Government of Canada would use its good influence to try to induce the Governments of the USA and Great Britain, with which it has close ties, to end the experimental explosions of atomic and hydrogen bombs which are carried on by these states.

Certain grounds for this were given to us by your recent speech in Toronto, where you expressed the hope that the Western Powers would soon end the testing of nuclear weapons. Unfortunately your letter does not contain this confirmation. Meanwhile any initiative and any steps by the Canadian Government to promote a solution to the problem of the general cessation of nuclear weapons tests, as well as of other problems of deep concern to mankind, would be of positive significance. They would constitute a definite contribution to the great cause of strengthening peace between peoples, towards which the Soviet Government is consistently and invariably striving.

With sincere respect,

N. KHRUSHCHEV

