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DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

CANADA

MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES EXTÉRIEURES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 1964.

No. 10

Following is the text of a letter from the Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson, in reply to the letter of December 31, 1963, addressed to him by Mr. N.S. Khrushchev, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R., concerning territorial and frontier disputes and the means of settling them. The text of Mr. Pearson's letter was delivered in Moscow this morning by the Canadian Ambassador, Mr. Robert Ford, to the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Ottawa, February 4, 1964.

Dear Chairman Khrushchev,

Thank you for your letter of December 31, 1963 concerning territorial and frontier disputes and the means of settling them. I have given it careful study and would like to make some observations on your analysis of the problem and on your proposals.

First of all, I welcome this indication of your concern over the necessity of finding peaceful solutions to international disputes. Canada has consistently worked for general acceptance of discussion, negotiation, mediation or arbitration as the means of attaining that objective. We are therefore always ready to examine new ways of reasserting and strengthening the principle already enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations of the renunciation of force or threat of force in international disputes and relations between states.

You have concentrated in your letter on territorial and border disputes. This is but one aspect of a larger problem, and I hope you will agree that other disputes should also be settled by peaceful means only. In the present age, other types of disputes can be just as critical and can therefore lead to just as dangerous and potentially explosive situations as can disputes over frontiers. In any further exploration of the problem, therefore, our range of discussion should include disputes arising from any and all causes. It is unreasonable to assert that, although the use of force must be eschewed in territorial and border disputes, it is acceptable in disputes to which anyone chooses to give the arbitrary appellation of, for example, "wars of liberation". It is inadequate, in my view, to emphasize the prohibition of the use of direct and overt force only and to make no attempt to outlaw subversion, infiltration by trained guerillas, and the supply of arms to insurrectionary forces -- all of which are, as I am sure you realize, the cause of dangerous tensions in a great many parts of the world today.

I should be also less than frank with you if I did not state that my own interpretation of various events and situations described in your letter -- for example, some of your references to military bases abroad, colonialism and imperialism -- differs in certain respects from your own. I am convinced, however, that responsible and reasonable discussions and negotiations depend to a great extent on the avoidance of unnecessarily controversial interpretation of situations from which tensions between states arise. Hence although we seem to be some distance apart on several aspects of the problem, I should like to try to bridge the gap, and it is for this reason that I am making these comments and suggestions aimed at achievement of the goal you proclaim.

I welcome your recognition of the need to continue working towards general and complete disarmament, while at the same time paying increased attention to more limited objectives aimed at initial measures of disarmament and at the further reduction of tension. Agreement on general and complete disarmament is of necessity and longer term undertaking but the importance of the goal is so great and the consequence of failure so serious that it must be pursued with exceptional patience and determination regardless of present or possible future difficulties.

You refer to the various proposals which the Soviet Government has put forward on general and complete disarmament but, as you know, the Western nations also have put forward constructive and far-reaching proposals in this field. Moreover, the West has similarly offered a number of proposals for collateral measures of disarmament aimed at promoting international peace and security. It will continue to be a primary aim of the Canadian Government during the resumed negotiations in Geneva to seek ways of reconciling differences between existing proposals, both on general disarmament and on collateral measures, and I hope that the Soviet Government will follow the same constructive approach.

It is encouraging to read in your letter that the United Nations can, in your view, contribute positively to peaceful solutions of territorial and frontier problems. I heartily agree with you, and indeed believe that it can contribute effectively to the peaceful solution of many other disputes as well. You will be aware of my personal interest in that organization and of the important place it occupies in the formulation and implementation of Canadian foreign policy. Canada has, for example, given active support to United Nations peace-keeping operations, contributing tangibly in men, money and materials. In addition, as I emphasized in my speech to the General Assembly on September 19, 1963, we

should all cooperate to strengthen and improve the peace-keeping methods of the United Nations, and place them on a sound financial footing, so that the Organization will have a continuing capacity to discharge its first responsibility -- the maintenance of international peace and security. We should also like to see the Security Council become effective as the United Nations organ with the primary responsibility in this field. I hope that our respective representatives in New York may work more effectively together in order to see how these objectives might be reached.

As I observed to your Ambassador in Ottawa when he delivered your message to me, many of the general undertakings concerning renunciation of the use of force envisaged in your letter would appear to be spelled out already in the Charter of the United Nations, which also recognizes the important principle of the right of self-defence by national and collective means. I am glad to see the reaffirmation of Soviet adherence to important international obligations assumed by members of the United Nations and I consider that this exchange of letters may in itself serve to strengthen attachment to peaceful processes in international affairs. It seems to me that even more important than texts of the obligations which nations have assumed is the willingness of their governments to abide by and to adjust their policies to the spirit and the letter of such obligations. I hope that the present correspondence will help to create an atmosphere in which governments will find it easier to act in this way as well as to reach agreement on specific matters.

This brings me to the four-point proposal near the end of your letter concerning an international agreement on the renunciation of force in solving territorial disputes. It would seem to me important, in any serious consideration of the subject, to take into account that subversion, infiltration and clandestine arms supply can be just

as dangerous as overt and direct aggression; that some administrative dividing lines and access routes are just as sensitive as recognized international boundaries; and that the Charter of the United Nations specifically and properly permits the use of force in self-defence.

With these considerations in mind and in consultation with Canada's allies, I shall be happy to have Canadian representatives in the appropriate forum take part in discussion of the questions raised in your letter and in this and other replies to it, to see whether we can arrive at understandings and agreements which genuinely further the cause of peace, security and mutual trust in the world.

Yours sincerely,

(signed) Lester B. Pearson

His Excellency

N.S. Khrushchev,

Chairman of the Council of Ministers

of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics,

MOSCOW, U.S.S.R.