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LETTER DATED 26 SEPTEMBER 1961 FROM THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY TRANSMITTING A MEMORANDUM OF THE USSR GOVERNMENT ON MEASURES TO EASE INTERNATIONAL TENSION, STRENGTHEN CONFIDENCE AMONG STATES AND CONTRIBUTE TO GENERAL AND COMPLETE DISARMAMENT

I transmit herewith a Memorandum of the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on measures to ease international tension, strengthen confidence among States and contribute to general and complete disarmament.

I should be glad if you would arrange to have this Memorandum of the Soviet Government circulated as a General Assembly document.

(Signed) A. GROMYKO

MEMORANDUM

OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS
on measures to ease international tension, strengthen confidence
among States and contribute to general and complete disarmament

26 September 1961

In our day there is no task more vital or urgent than the task of maintaining peace. The efforts of all States, of all Members of the United Nations and of every person on earth should be bent towards preventing the outbreak of war and eliminating it for ever from the life of human society. A true and sure road to this goal is through general and complete disarmament, which will utterly demolish the military organization machinery of States and ensure a world without weapons and without wars.

The Soviet Government persistently strives for the immediate conclusion of an agreement on general and complete disarmament and has repeatedly made specific proposals on this question which took into account all the positive elements in the position of the Western Powers. The programme of general and complete disarmament put forward on 23 September 1960 by Mr. N.S. Khrushchev, the Head of the USSR Government, for consideration by the General Assembly at its fifteenth session, provides a good foundation for such an agreement since it envisages the radical solution of the disarmament problem and the complete deliverance of mankind from the burden of armaments. The Soviet Union is ready immediately to sign a treaty on general and complete disarmament establishing any kind of international control, however strict.

While it regards general and complete disarmament as the principal means of securing a lasting peace, the Soviet Government at the same time does not exclude the possibility of reaching agreement on a number of measures that would contribute to the easing of international tension and the strengthening of confidence among States and thereby facilitate the implementation of general and complete disarmament. Needless to say, both in selecting these measures and in putting them into effect the guiding principle must be that no State or group of States should gain military advantages and that all States should enjoy an equal measure of security. The application of these measures should not divert attention and

effort from the solution of the main problem - that of general and complete disarmament. On the contrary, each of these measures individually and all of them in combination should help to create a situation conducive to the conclusion and effective application of such a treaty. Along with the consideration of the disarmament problem as a whole and of several other important international problems, steps can and must be taken towards the adoption of a number of simple decisions, comprehensible to millions of people, which would lessen the danger of the outbreak of war and on which States might reach agreement in the immediate future.

Acting in this spirit, the Soviet Government proposes that agreement should be reached on the following steps, or, at least, on some of them:

1. Freezing of the military budgets of States

The war preparations and the headlong arms race impose a heavy burden on the toiling people, aggravate international tension and increase the danger of the outbreak of war. In its desire to eliminate this dangerous situation in the world, the Soviet Government proposes that, without awaiting the solution of the problem of general and complete disarmament, certain concerted measures should be taken with a view to establishing a ceiling for military expenditures in the budgets of States at a level not to exceed their military appropriations as at 1 January 1961. Quite obviously such measures will not be detrimental to the security of any State.

It is, indeed, no secret that more than enough weapons, including nuclear weapons, have already been stockpiled to inflict colossal destruction. At the same time, the continuing expansion of military expenditure not only impedes normal economic development but also greatly intensifies mistrust and suspicion in relations among States, thereby further complicating the solution of the problem of general and complete disarmament.

The freezing of military budgets would be an excellent contribution towards preventing the intensification of the arms race. As is well known, the Soviet Union has more than once already taken certain unilateral steps aimed at reducing its armed forces and armaments, with a corresponding reduction in military appropriations. The Soviet Government is ready to continue along this road

provided that the United States and the other Western Powers, for their part, also take the appropriate steps in the same direction. There need be no doubt that this peaceful initiative will be supported by all States.

2. Renunciation of the use of nuclear weapons

Even before the conclusion of an agreement on general and complete disarmament which will put an end to the very existence of atomic and hydrogen bombs and of their means of delivery, the States which produce nuclear weapons might, by way of moral preparation for such an agreement, announce their decision not to use nuclear weapons, just as, in the past, a number of States proclaimed the inadmissibility of the use of poison gases and bacteriological weapons. It is common knowledge that the agreement banning means of chemical and bacteriological warfare has stood the test of time. There can be no doubt that the existence of this agreement largely contributed to the fact that even in the years of bitter fighting in World War II, millions of persons, including children, women and old people, escaped agonizing death from poison gases or artificially induced epidemics, despite the fact that the warring States then had the necessary weapons at their disposal.

But since mankind has proved able to protect itself against one manifestation of barbarism, why not try to do the same with regard to another and even more dreadful manifestation, namely the use of modern nuclear weapons which would doom hundreds of millions of people to death indiscriminately, without differentiating between the front line and the rear, between servicemen and civilians?

A suitable basis for solving the problem of the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons might, in the Soviet Government's view, be furnished by the draft resolution concerning the conclusion of an appropriate international convention which Ethiopia and other Afro-Asian countries submitted at the fifteenth session of the General Assembly. The Soviet Union still supports that proposal. However, if the Western Powers are not now ready to pledge themselves, together with the Soviet Union, unconditionally to renounce the use of nuclear weapons, agreement might be reached, as a first step, on an undertaking not to be the first to use nuclear weapons.

3. Prohibition of war propaganda

All States could make an important contribution towards improving the international atmosphere by jointly advocating the cessation of all types of propaganda for war or enmity and hatred among nations.

Although, as far back as 1947, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a resolution banning war propaganda, that resolution is still not being observed in many countries. It is no secret that in the Press, on radio and television and in the public statements by prominent personalities in certain countries the idea of the inevitability of war is being systematically propounded, the nuclear arms race is being justified, and feelings of hatred and enmity towards other nations are being kindled.

As we know, various attitudes are taken towards such propaganda. In some countries it is regarded virtually as an expression of freedom of speech. We, on the other hand, call a spade a spade and regard incitement to war, even when it takes a disguised form, as one of the most heinous crimes, since it seriously undermines confidence in relations among States, contributes to the acceleration of military preparations and increases the danger of war, which would bring death to millions upon millions of human beings.

But whatever view one may take of war propaganda, one fact remains clear, namely, that such propaganda impedes the establishment of peaceful relations among States. If steps were taken everywhere to put an end to such propaganda not just one country, but all countries and all peoples would benefit.

Various steps might be taken to prevent such propaganda. The Soviet Union and other socialist countries have enacted special legislation prohibiting war propaganda. Similar action might be taken in other countries as well. The adoption of a joint declaration or statement calling for the cessation of war propaganda, which is inimical to the cause of peace and understanding among peoples, would be of great political importance.

4. Conclusion of a non-aggression pact between the NATO countries and the Warsaw Treaty countries

Seeking possible ways of reaching mutual understanding on measures which would offer some prospect of overcoming, even if only in the future, the division of the world into blocs, the Soviet Union has repeatedly proposed that a

non-aggression pact should be concluded between the NATO countries and the States which are parties to the Warsaw Treaty. Such a pact might be based on an undertaking by the contracting parties not to use force or the threat of force and to settle any disputes which might arise between the parties solely by peaceful means. The parties to the pact would hold consultations on questions relating to its implementation. If this step were taken, it would undoubtedly improve the situation in Europe and strengthen the confidence of the peoples of the world in the possibility of living in conditions of real peace. Unless this question is settled, mutual suspicion will persist, there will always be a possibility of complications and, furthermore, there will continue to be a chronic threat of military conflict.

The signing of a non-aggression pact would not alter the existing balance of power between the blocs by a single soldier or a single rifle. It would not even, in itself, put the question of liquidating such blocs on a practical plane, although, in the opinion of the Soviet Government, that would be the best solution. At the same time, the proposed pact would be a demonstration of the fact that the States belonging to opposing blocs had no aggressive intentions and would help to create a healthier international atmosphere. The pact would act as a strong deterrent to any potential aggressor, who, if he were to launch an aggressive war, would find himself internationally isolated and subject to all the consequences which this would involve.

5. Withdrawal of troops from foreign territory

The Soviet Union is in favour of withdrawing troops from foreign territory. It has repeatedly offered to come to an agreement with the United States and the other Western Powers on the withdrawal of foreign troops from European territory, the idea being that Soviet troops would leave Germany, Hungary and Poland and that the United States, the United Kingdom, France and Canada would withdraw within their national frontiers their troops stationed in other NATO countries.

As the experience of previous negotiations shows, however, the United States is obviously still not ready to accept the Soviet proposals on complete withdrawal of foreign troops from the territory of European States. In these circumstances,

it is essential, in the Soviet Government's view, at least to settle the question of reducing the number of foreign troops stationed in the territory both of the NATO countries and the Warsaw Treaty countries. As a first step, there might be an agreement to reduce the number of all foreign troops stationed in Germany by one third or by some other accepted proportion over a given period of time and to institute the necessary control over the execution of this measure.

A reduction in the number of foreign troops in German territory would have particular importance for the maintenance of peace. More fuel for war has accumulated in the centre of Europe than in any other part of the world. As a result of this situation, there is a new threat of the outbreak of a world conflagration. An end must be put to the inflammation of warlike passions in this powder keg of Europe. A reduction in the number of all foreign troops, leading to their complete withdrawal from the territory of Germany, would help to normalize the situation in Germany and in Europe as a whole, which would be a major contribution to the strengthening of world peace.

In the Soviet Government's view, the situation which has arisen in connexion with the question of a treaty of peace with Germany must not be allowed to impede consideration of this matter.

6. Measures to prevent the further spread of nuclear weapons

The Soviet Government considers that there is at present a possibility of concluding an agreement by which the nuclear Powers would undertake not to give nuclear weapons to other countries and those States which do not possess nuclear weapons would undertake not to make them or to obtain them from the nuclear Powers.

It does not seem necessary to dwell on the acute danger to peace which would be created by an increase in the number of Powers possessing nuclear weapons or the secret of their production, regardless of whether they possessed them individually or received them within the framework of some military bloc. It should be clearly realized what would be the result of placing atomic weapons at the disposal of the Federal Republic of Germany, where there are many people who cherish revanchist dreams and would stop at nothing to achieve their aggressive ends. What action would the Federal Republic of Germany's neighbours, and not only its neighbours have to take in that event? Naturally, in such a situation,

the Soviet Union and other countries would be obliged to take serious counter measures to safeguard their own security. It is not difficult to imagine what the course of events would be in Europe in those new circumstances.

It would also be a very much more complicated business to solve the disarmament problem if the number of nuclear Powers increased. If this problem already presents so many difficulties, particularly as regards the abolition of nuclear weapons and control over that process, what is the situation likely to be if not just three or four but, let us say, a dozen States from both East and West were to possess nuclear weapons? Clearly, that would mean a major setback for the world in its attempts to solve the disarmament problem.

7. Establishment of nuclear-free zones

Another effective way of preventing the spread of nuclear weapons on our planet would be to reach an agreement that such weapons should not be stored or produced by anyone at all in certain defined geographic zones.

In recent years, the Governments of various countries have put forward a whole series of plans and projects for the establishment of nuclear-free zones. There have been proposals that such zones should be established in the most sensitive areas of Europe. The People's Republic of China has proposed that a nuclear-free zone should be established in the Far East and in the Pacific basin. A similar plan has been put forward for Africa and has met with support from many African States. All this shows how strongly plans to establish nuclear-free zones appeal to the peoples and Governments of many countries. It may literally be said that the air is full of plans for such zones.

The Soviet Government considers it essential to contribute to the practical realization of these plans. Hardly anyone will dispute that the establishment of such zones would reduce the probability of military conflict, would avert the possibility of a dangerous spread of nuclear and ballistic weapons to new countries and continents and would help to create an atmosphere of confidence in relations among States. At the same time, useful experience would be acquired in the organization of control and inspection - even if only on a regional scale for the time being - which would have positive significance for the establishment

of control over general and complete disarmament. In the Soviet Government's view, it would be a simple matter to make a nuclear-free zone of the whole African continent where there are many States which actively pursue a neutralist policy and firmly condemn nuclear weapons. A proposal to make Africa a nuclear-free zone was put forward at the last session of the General Assembly by Ghana and six other African States, which proposed that Africa should be regarded as a zone where atomic and hydrogen weapons were not to be produced, stored or stockpiled. As you know, the Soviet Union supported this proposal and, as before, is ready to offer every assistance in carrying it into effect.

A start on the establishment of nuclear-free zones might also be made in Central Europe, a subject on which detailed proposals have been put forward by the Polish Government, with the support of Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic. If it was forbidden to store or produce nuclear and ballistic weapons in the territory of the Federal Republic of Germany, the German Democratic Republic, Poland and Czechoslovakia, there would be, as it were, a zone of reduced tension between the NATO and the Warsaw Treaty systems. The adoption of this measure would be an important step towards improving the whole situation in Europe and warding off the threat of war.

The proposal to establish nuclear-free zones is particularly realistic in that no one would obtain any military advantage, and the existing balance of military forces in the world would not be upset in this case, either.

8. Steps to decrease the danger of surprise attack

In its desire to eliminate the danger of the outbreak of war, the Soviet Union proposed as far back as in 1958 that certain specific steps for preventing surprise attack, which would greatly reduce the threat of the outbreak of war, should be agreed upon and put into effect. Although the possibility of an attack involving the use of ballistic and nuclear weapons of extermination cannot be wholly excluded except in conditions of general and complete disarmament, when the military machinery of States would be completely dismantled, the Soviet Government considers that it would be possible forthwith to take a number of steps the execution of which would further the cause of peace.

Naturally, any steps to avert surprise attack should lead to the elimination of suspicion among States and not to its intensification. It is important to ensure that they do not entail attempts to obtain military advantages for any group of countries or the collection of intelligence information and that the security of the participating States is not jeopardized.

The most practical steps which might be taken at an early date include the setting up of land control posts at railway junctions and major ports and on motor roads, the function of which would be to ensure that dangerous concentrations of armed forces and military equipment did not take place.

The Soviet Government is of the opinion that the establishment of such land control posts might constitute an effective means of lessening the danger of surprise attack. No one is likely to dispute the fact that, even in this age of nuclear weapons, preparations for a large-scale modern war inevitably call for the concentration of large military units with large quantities of armaments and equipment at certain specific points.

The above measure might be accompanied by an appropriate reduction in the armed forces and armaments in territories situated within a given distance of either side of the demarcation line and their withdrawal from such territories.

The measures proposed by the Soviet Union would provide adequate means of detecting early signs of troop concentrations in the most critical areas and would give timely warning that an attack was being mounted. At the same time, these measures take the security interests of the two sides equally into account. Their implementation would lay a useful foundation for wider co-operation among States in strengthening European security and would contribute to the realization of general and complete disarmament.

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The Soviet Government does not regard as exhaustive the above list of measures for lifting the burden of the cold war from international relations. It will give careful consideration to all constructive observations on this subject and is ready to exchange views on these questions in whatever manner may be deemed most appropriate.