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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 AND TRANSMITTING A  
MEMORANDUM OF THE USSR GOVERNMENT ON THE QUESTION OF NUCLEAR  
WEAPONS TESTS

In connexion with the consideration of the question of general and complete disarmament at the current session of the General Assembly, I transmit herewith a memorandum of the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the question of nuclear weapons tests.

I should be obliged if you would have this memorandum of the Soviet Government circulated as an official General Assembly document.

(Signed) A. GROMYKO  
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the  
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

MEMORANDUM

OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS

on the question of nuclear weapons tests

26 September 1961

The Governments of the United States of America and the United Kingdom have placed on the agenda of the sixteenth session of the United Nations General Assembly an item entitled "The urgent need for a treaty to ban nuclear weapons tests under effective international control". The fact that the Western Powers, after having for many years frustrated a solution of the problem of the cessation of nuclear tests while at the same time intensifying the tempo of the nuclear arms race, have brought this item before the General Assembly can mean only one thing: that the Governments of the United States of America and of the United Kingdom wish to use the rostrum of the General Assembly to justify their policy on the nuclear weapons question, a policy fraught with danger for the peoples of the world, and to secure the opportunity of continuing without impediment their preparations for setting off a thermonuclear war which threatens appalling consequences for all mankind.

In view of the interest of many States Members of the United Nations in the question of nuclear weapons tests, the Soviet Government feels it necessary to put its views on this question, which is closely and inseparably linked with the goal of general and complete disarmament, before the United Nations. It is firmly convinced that the Soviet Union's position fully meets the interests of all peoples of the world and will ensure the genuine and final elimination of the threat of nuclear war from human society.

1. The foundation of the Soviet Government's entire policy is the necessity of guaranteeing a lasting and inviolable peace on earth - a world without weapons, a world without wars.

The peoples have always suffered on account of wars, which have brought them the direst calamities and sacrifices. In our own time, when nuclear weapons unprecedented in destructive power have been created, when inter-continental missiles capable of delivering these weapons to any point on the globe in a matter of minutes have emerged, war would be a monstrous crime. Now that States have

obtained possession of nuclear weapons, any armed conflict between them, even if it began on a small scale, could develop into a destructive thermonuclear world war.

But war must not be permitted once more to wipe out millions and millions of human lives, or to destroy the great material and spiritual values which have been created by man's labour and genius. This is not the end for which men have built cities, transformed deserts into flowering gardens, unlocked the secret of the atom and coldly invaded space. They have done these things in the name of life and peace; and their hope is that war will never disturb peaceful constructive labour.

Now, in the century of the atom and the conquest of space, it is more than ever before essential that bold, far-reaching steps should be taken to put an end to wars and to establish lasting peace on earth. What must be done? The only sure and dependable way to deliver the peoples from the fear of another catastrophic war and to free them from the heavy burden of military expenditure is disarmament, general and complete disarmament. The Soviet Government has firmly and consistently stood for an early and practical solution of this question, and still does so. As early as the fourteenth session of the United Nations General Assembly, Mr. Khrushchev, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, submitted on behalf of the Soviet Government a practical programme of general and complete disarmament which provided for the disbanding of all armed forces, the elimination of all armaments, including the destruction of stockpiles of nuclear arms and other weapons of mass destruction, the cessation of war production, the abolition of the military organization and machinery of the State - war ministries, general staffs and military training establishments - and the prohibition of expenditure for military purposes. The Soviet proposals provided for the establishment of strict and effective international control of all disarmament measures.

Since then, the Soviet Government has consistently striven for the preparation and conclusion of an agreement on general and complete disarmament, and has, moreover, for the sake of the speedy attainment of agreement, met the Western Powers on many important aspects of such a programme. Since the Western Powers have tried to use the problem of control as a stumbling-block on the road

to general and complete disarmament, the Soviet Government has declared its readiness to accept any control proposals of the Western Powers, if they for their part will agree to accept the Soviet Union's proposals for general and complete disarmament.

2. In advocating general and complete disarmament as the only sure way of securing lasting peace, the Soviet Government has always considered that the solution of this basic problem will simultaneously also provide a solution to all separate, partial questions, including that of the cessation of nuclear weapons tests. At the same time, the Soviet Government for a number of years conceded the possibility of settling the question of the cessation of nuclear tests separately, without awaiting a solution of the general problem of disarmament. In order to facilitate the solution of this question the Soviet Government on 31 March 1958 took the unilateral decision to stop testing atomic and hydrogen weapons, although this step on its part was accompanied by some risk since the Soviet Union had carried out fewer nuclear test explosions than the United States and the United Kingdom. Nevertheless the Soviet Government did take this step, for the sake of the speedy attainment of agreement.

Later on, however, the Soviet Government, during the Geneva talks, encountered a number of circumstances which compelled it to reconsider its position. It came up against a solid wall of resistance on the part of the Western Powers to any proposals aimed at the real cessation of nuclear testing.

While the United States and the United Kingdom were negotiating in Geneva on the conclusion of an agreement for the cessation of nuclear weapons tests, France, their ally in the aggressive North Atlantic bloc (NATO), acting in the interests of the whole bloc, carried out tests of nuclear weapons. France did this despite the Soviet Government's frequent admonitions and its direct warning that if France did not halt its experimental explosions the USSR would be compelled to resume tests. As you know, the Governments of the United States and the United Kingdom failed to exercise the necessary influence on their French ally. On the contrary, they actually encouraged the French experiments, because the results of the tests were used to strengthen NATO's arms.

At the same time the French Government frankly declared that neither the fact that the three Powers were negotiating in Geneva on the cessation of tests, nor

even the conclusion of an agreement on the subject, in any way bound or would bind France as regards its conduct of nuclear weapons tests and its creation of a "nuclear striking force".

Naturally, it is immaterial to the Soviet Union precisely which of the members of NATO secures new information by means of nuclear weapons experiments. The conduct of nuclear weapons tests by France was part of a general programme for the strengthening of NATO's military potential. Thus, NATO and the States belonging to it gained definite military advantages over the Soviet Union, which ever since 1958 had carried out no nuclear weapons tests.

It may be seen from these facts that the Western Powers were playing a double game, in which some of the members of the NATO military bloc were sitting at the negotiating table in Geneva and pretending to be trying to reach agreement on the cessation of nuclear weapons tests, while France, their NATO partner, was exploding atomic bombs one after another on the Sahara ranges. Thus they wished to prevent the Soviet Union from developing the weapons it possessed, while themselves secretly perfecting their own weapons. This double game has now been exposed, in particular by the notorious fact that an agreement has been concluded between the United States and France for co-operation in the use of atomic energy for military purposes.

3. This scheme of the United States, the United Kingdom and France to secure one-sided military advantages over the Soviet Union was also made absolutely clear in the course of the Geneva negotiations on the conclusion of a treaty for the discontinuance of nuclear weapons tests.

The Government of the United States strove stubbornly to secure the legalization of underground nuclear weapons testing, having long been working out a programme for the improvement of nuclear weapons precisely by underground tests in mines and underground galleries in Nevada.

With the same object of securing for itself oblique means of developing its nuclear weapons, the United States Government persistently sought the agreement of the Soviet Union to the carrying out of an unlimited number of nuclear explosions for allegedly peaceful purposes. But anyone who has any acquaintance at all with modern nuclear technology knows perfectly well that a nuclear installation developed for so-called peaceful purposes can be developed for military purposes too - can be used, that is, for perfecting nuclear weapons.

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These proposals which the United States has so long and so insistently urged have served as a cover for the preparations vigorously pursued in the United States for the underground testing of nuclear weapons. In 1960, the United States began large-scale preparations for a new series of nuclear weapons tests, preparations which official American representatives did not even consider it necessary to conceal. The American Press published reports on the preparatory works, photographs of the tunnels, statements by senior United States officials about the need for the speedy resumption of nuclear tests, and so on.

It is a characteristic fact that as early as 5 September 1961 it was announced in the United States that an extensive programme of underground tests was to be carried out. And indeed, in the appeal dated 3 September 1961 addressed by the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom to the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR it was proposed that agreement should be reached on the cessation of atmospheric nuclear weapons tests only. On the other hand, the question of test explosions of nuclear weapons underground or in outer space was omitted from the proposed agreement - yet another indication of the desire of the United States and the United Kingdom to keep a free hand to conduct nuclear tests while tying the hands of the Soviet Union in its efforts to increase its defensive capacity.

4. While representatives of the three Powers were sitting at the Geneva conference on the discontinuance of nuclear tests, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, the Federal Republic of Germany and other members of NATO were continuing uninterruptedly to intensify the arms race, especially with regard to nuclear, chemical and bacteriological weapons.

In NATO practical preparations were started for equipping the West German army with nuclear missiles. All over the world, and with feverish haste, new American military bases designed to serve as support points for aggression against the socialist countries were constructed one after another. By March 1961, plans were announced for a drastic increase in the United States military budget, while at the same time military preparations were accelerated in the Federal Republic of Germany and some other NATO countries.

In recent months these military preparations, already unprecedented in scale, have attained particularly spectacular proportions. In response to the Soviet Union's proposals for the immediate conclusion of a German peace treaty and, on

the basis of that treaty, the normalization of the situation in West Berlin, the United States and other leading members of NATO launched a campaign of outright threats against the Soviet Union and other socialist countries and lapsed into noisy war hysteria. Increasing their already swollen military budgets, calling up more and more classes of reservists, hastily forming more and more new divisions and deploying them at points close to the frontiers of the Soviet Union, the Governments of the United States and its NATO allies have brought the international situation to the very limit of exacerbation.

5. In this situation of rapidly increasing international tension, the Soviet Government found itself compelled to look to the defences of the USSR. The decision to carry out test explosions of nuclear weapons was forced upon it. The Soviet Government embarked on these measures reluctantly, under the pressure of circumstances, but it could not avoid taking them; it could not sacrifice the vital security interests of the Soviet Union and all the socialist countries.

The measures which have been taken to strengthen the Soviet Union's defensive power will at the same time promote the security of all other peace-loving States and peoples and the common cause of preserving and strengthening peace. Those who are preparing for war must clearly realize that aggression from their side will meet with a shattering rebuff, that there are in the world powerful forces fully armed to repulse successfully any attack by any aggressor or any combination of aggressors upon the peaceful labour and security of the peoples. Thus and thus only can the potential aggressor be deprived of his appetite for starting criminal games with fire; thus and thus only can these military maniacs and adventurers be brought to their senses.

6. Another reason for the Soviet Government's decision to resume nuclear testing was the stubborn resistance put up by the Western Powers to all the Soviet Union's attempts to make some headway in the talks on general and complete disarmament, and their refusal, despite the decision of the United Nations General Assembly, to proceed with the drafting of an agreement on that subject.

The Western Powers' policy of preparing for war, their intensified military preparations and their sabotage of the United Nations General Assembly's decision regarding the attainment of agreement on general and complete disarmament placed

the whole question of the cessation of nuclear weapons tests in a new light. It became clear that the conclusion of a separate treaty on the discontinuance of nuclear testing at a time when the Western Powers were persisting in a reckless armaments race could serve only to breed in people the illusion that something was being done to prevent a nuclear war, whereas the Western Powers were, in fact, steering a course leading things precisely to such a war.

The conclusion of a treaty for the discontinuance of nuclear tests in such conditions and in isolation from a programme of general and complete disarmament could only give the peoples an illusory feeling of security; it could only act as a soporific, as it were, to lull their vigilance in the preservation of peace.

After all, it is perfectly clear that a treaty on the cessation of tests could not by itself halt for a single day the accumulation of weapons of mass destruction by the nuclear Powers - not to mention the fact that the existing stockpiles of these weapons would remain untouched. And if, for example, the West German revanchists and militarists, taking advantage of the protection of the United States and NATO, staked the fate of mankind in a crazy attempt to turn the results of the last war to their own profit by force and dragged the NATO countries into a new world war, then a treaty on the cessation of tests would in no way help to prevent the use of nuclear weapons.

Thus, a treaty on the cessation of tests concluded in isolation from a solution of the general problem of disarmament and against the background of a continued nuclear armaments race would not merely not promote the cause of peace but might even have the opposite consequences and serve as a cover for the preparation of a nuclear war.

7. Nor, while the Western Powers continue the nuclear arms race, could the conclusion of a separate treaty on the cessation of nuclear testing help to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. So long as the nuclear arms race goes on, no one can prevent States which do not yet possess nuclear weapons from mobilizing their scientific and technical resources to manufacture them.

Divorced from general and complete disarmament, a three-Power agreement for the prohibition of nuclear weapons tests, the aim sought through the Geneva negotiations, would place upon States no obligations other than moral ones. But France has already flagrantly violated all these moral obligations, and has done

so, moreover, with the assistance of the United States and the United Kingdom. When it was announced that the three Powers had discontinued atomic tests, the reply was made that the USSR, the United States and the United Kingdom had already conducted tests and were producing nuclear weapons, and that France too wished to join the "nuclear club", i.e. to produce nuclear weapons and carry out an unlimited number of tests. Thus, unless persistent and resolute efforts are made to achieve general and complete disarmament there can be no guarantee that tomorrow other States too will not begin testing their own nuclear weapons, even if a treaty for the cessation of tests has, in fact, been concluded between the three Powers.

We must look the facts in the face: the problem today is not the harmful effect of atomic radiation on living organisms but how to save mankind from the danger of a thermo-nuclear war, how to save the lives of tens and hundreds of millions of people, how to prevent atomic weapons from being used. But this can be done only by carrying out general and complete disarmament. This is now the main goal, the main task.

8. What, then, would be the result, in present conditions, of the conclusion between the Soviet Union, the United States and the United Kingdom of a treaty for the cessation of tests? Only this: the legalization of the system whereby the Soviet Union, the mighty bulwark of the peace, independence and security of the peoples, would be prevented from improving the nuclear weapons necessary for the preservation of peace so long as general and complete disarmament has not been achieved, while the Western Powers would pursue their war preparations by continuing to test newer and more destructive types of atomic and hydrogen weapons. To permit such a situation would be tantamount to urging the aggressors on in the execution of their plans, plans dangerous for the whole of mankind.

9. What then, is to be done? How, in the present conditions, are we to solve the problem of the cessation of nuclear weapons tests?

The Soviet Government believes that the only practical and rational solution is to settle the question of the cessation of nuclear weapons tests not in isolation but on the basis of general and complete disarmament. This approach eliminates all obstacles and difficulties and would bar the possibility of any loopholes or means of evasion which might be exploited by those who do not want peace, who base their policy on deceiving the peoples.

If States carry out general and complete disarmament under effective international control, if all types of weapons, including nuclear weapons, are abolished and armies disbanded, then the incentive for the development of nuclear weapons will disappear too, and with it the incentive for testing them. There will then be no temptation for anyone to test nuclear weapons on the ground, underground, in the atmosphere or in outer space; indeed, there will be nothing to test in any case because nuclear weapons will have been destroyed.

Thus, the difficulties which have arisen in the negotiations on the question of control, including control over the prohibition of nuclear weapons tests, will also disappear. It was for this very reason that the Soviet Government declared its willingness to agree to any control measures proposed by the Western Powers, if they will accept the Soviet proposals for general and complete disarmament. The Soviet Union will never agree to disarmament without effective control, for general and complete disarmament will demand the most rigorous international control, and free access to all areas will have to be opened to the control organs without veto or restriction in any form.

General and complete disarmament will not only safeguard the health of the people and obviate the dangerous consequences arising from atomic radiation; it will preserve life itself and save men from the danger of having loosed upon their heads the death-dealing and destructive force of nuclear weapons.

The Soviet Union is firmly convinced that as matters now stand its proposal for the solution of the problem of the cessation of nuclear weapons tests on the basis of general and complete disarmament is the only right and realistic one. The achievement of agreement on general and complete disarmament and the solution of the question of the cessation of nuclear weapons tests on that basis would be in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter, which requires all States, large and small, regardless of their social systems, to live in peace and friendship and to settle their disputes, not by force but through negotiation based on co-operation and respect for the rights and interests of all parties.

The Government of the USSR solemnly declares that the Soviet Union is ready without delay to sign an agreement for general and complete disarmament under strict international control.

The Soviet Government appeals to all peoples, to all the Governments of States Members of the United Nations, to do everything necessary to bring about an immediate solution to the question of general and complete disarmament under strict international control, and so ensure lasting peace on earth.

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