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LETTER DATED 9 MARCH 1962 FROM THE DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS TO THE UNITED NATIONS
ADDRESSED TO THE ACTING SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to request you to arrange for the attached message dated 3 March 1962 from Mr. N.S. Khrushchev, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, to Mr. John F. Kennedy, President of the United States of America, concerning the forthcoming meeting of the eighteen-Power Disarmament Committee, to be circulated as an official United Nations document.

(Signed) P. MOROZOV
Deputy Permanent Representative
of the USSR to the United Nations

REPLY BY MR. N.S. KHRUSHCHEV, CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF
THE USSR, TO A MESSAGE DATED 25 FEBRUARY 1962 FROM MR. JOHN F. KENNEDY,
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Mr. President,

I have carefully studied your message of 25 February 1962. After considering the ideas you put forward concerning the forthcoming negotiations in the eighteen-Power Disarmament Committee, I remain convinced that the personal participation of the most responsible statesmen would be particularly necessary at the first stage - I repeat, at the first stage of the negotiations, when the direction they are to take and hence, to a considerable extent, their outcome will be determined.

As you know, disarmament negotiations have been going on for a good fifteen years now, becoming more intensive from time to time and then stagnating again, and it seems as if the hopes of the peoples are aroused only to be dashed once again. For all the abundance of methods of conducting these negotiations that have been tried - the establishment of various committees and sub-committees, commissions and sub-commissions, the discussion of disarmament questions in the United Nations, and the exchange of views through diplomatic channels - we are, as they say, back where we started.

To what conclusions does all this lead? Firstly, that it would be short-sighted, to say the least, to rely once again on methods which have shown themselves to be ineffective in the past and, secondly, that it is the bounden duty of the States taking part in the disarmament negotiations to find new and more reliable methods of conducting them.

That is the line the Soviet Government has taken, in submitting a proposal to the Governments of all the countries belonging to the eighteen-Power Committee that the Committee should begin its work at the highest level, with the participation of Heads of Government or Chiefs of State.

Our proposal was prompted solely by the desire to free the disarmament negotiations from the rut into which they fell when they had hardly even begun, and to pave the way for an agreement on general and complete disarmament. It would seem to be indisputable that the statesmen who have been given the broadest powers and occupy the position of greatest responsibility in their country would also

have much greater possibilities of coping with these difficult tasks. We therefore regret that our proposal for beginning the work of the eighteen-nation Committee at the highest level has not met with understanding on your part. The considerations advanced in your message are not capable of shaking the weighty and cogent argument that the course proposed by the Soviet Government is the best course.

You yourself note the need for a serious and dedicated approach to the forthcoming negotiations in the eighteen-nation Committee, and you urge that the leading statesmen should give unflinching attention to these negotiations. You admit, furthermore, that the personal participation of the Heads of Government in the disarmament negotiations may be useful, although you hold to the view that such participation should be deferred until a later stage in the negotiations. In this connexion you express the hope that developments in the eighteen-nation Committee and internationally would make it useful to arrange for the personal participation of the Heads of Government before 1 June.

It thus appears from the messages exchanged by the Heads of State that there is general agreement concerning the importance of the disarmament negotiations in the eighteen-nation Committee. No less important is the fact that the personal responsibility of the Heads of Governments and States for the success of these negotiations and the need for direct participation by statesmen of the highest rank in the work of the eighteen-nation Disarmament Committee are now recognized by all. We interpret this as a definite step towards our position. Since the United States and some of our other partners in the forthcoming negotiations are not as yet ready to agree to the personal participation of the leading statesmen in the work of the eighteen-nation Disarmament Committee from the outset, we shall proceed on the assumption, Mr. President, that both of us, as well as the leaders of the other States members of the Committee, will do this somewhat later.

The paramount consideration, of course, is to accomplish something, to reach agreement on general and complete disarmament, and we shall, at every stage of the negotiations, do our utmost to ensure their success. We are naturally in favour of utilizing the possibilities of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs to the full, for they can play a useful role if all the members of the Committee of Eighteen evince a desire to reach an agreement on disarmament. The position thus is that

the Foreign Ministers will be the first to set things in motion after the establishment of the Committee of Eighteen. Let us, then, wish them success! We do not, of course, object to the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the United States and the United Kingdom meeting with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the USSR, as you propose, before the Committee of Eighteen starts its work.

Several matters relating to the substance of the disarmament problem are also touched upon in your message. I should like to make the following comment in regard to these.

First of all, a few words about control. You believe that the views expressed on this subject in my previous message are based on a "misconception of the United States position".

I should be only too glad if the position of the United States Government on the question of control were other than we have imagined it to be up to now. Unfortunately, however, there is no factual basis to support such a conclusion.

The attitude of the Soviet Union towards the question of control has already been set forth in my previous message of 21 February 1962. Is there any need to repeat that the Soviet Union favours an honest agreement on disarmament under strict international control? I can reaffirm once again our oft-repeated statement that the Soviet Union is willing to accept any proposals of the Western Powers on disarmament control if the Western Powers will accept our proposals on general and complete disarmament. If the United States Government is really concerned about how an agreement on setting up disarmament control can be reached, then our willingness in this regard removes all difficulties in advance, and essentially there is no room left for disagreement.

A few words now about nuclear weapons tests. Let us speak frankly. I have just examined the speech in which you announced your decision that, beginning in the latter part of April of this year, the United States of America would carry out a series of nuclear tests in the atmosphere. Try as you may to justify this decision, there can be no doubt that it is a further expression of an aggressive line in international relations, that it is a blow directed at the Committee of Eighteen that is to begin work at any moment now, a blow directed against the forthcoming disarmament negotiations. No matter what attempts you made to

persuade us to the contrary, the shock wave from the United States nuclear tests in the Pacific Ocean will travel all the way to the Palais des Nations in Geneva.

You state that the United States of America is compelled to conduct further nuclear tests if it is not to fall behind the Soviet Union; but you did not even mention that the United States and its NATO allies have carried out far more nuclear test explosions than the Soviet Union. That, however, is the truth, and anyone who is not pursuing the specific aim of deceiving world public opinion must realize that if the United States and its allies, in addition to the nuclear tests they have already carried out, conduct a further series of such tests for the purpose of perfecting their nuclear weapons, then the Soviet Union will be compelled to test new types of its nuclear weapons to the extent which in these circumstances may be necessary for strengthening its security and preserving world peace. The Soviet Union was forced only a few months ago to carry out such tests because of the aggressive preparations of the NATO Powers.

When you assert that the United States cannot dispense with further tests of nuclear weapons, there is much that you leave unsaid. For the action contemplated by the United States Government involves more than just the nuclear explosions planned by the United States and its military-bloc allies. You are embarking on a new round in the contest to create increasingly lethal types of nuclear weapons; you are setting off as it were a chain reaction which, moreover, will become increasingly violent. This is what you refer to in your message as a "prudent policy"!

Where, Mr. President, is the logic in this? On the one hand you repeatedly assert in your speeches that the United States is ahead of the Soviet Union in the size of its nuclear weapons stockpile, and your military leaders constantly boast that they could wipe the Soviet Union and all the countries of the socialist camp from the face of the earth.

On the other hand, you now say that the United States must carry out nuclear weapons tests if it is not to be left behind in armaments by the Soviet Union. These two statements obviously do not tally.

What your logic, Mr. President, amounts to is that you are now announcing a new series of nuclear weapons tests to be conducted by the United States of America, whereas just recently you and the entire Western Press were demonstrating

and correctly demonstrating - how harmful such tests are. How often was it then said that nuclear explosions contaminate the air, the soil and vegetation, that radioactive fall-out, with the contaminated vegetation, are absorbed by animal organisms, especially by cattle, and that this fall-out is transmitted to children by the milk they drink.

But it now appears that all these arguments were directed solely against the Soviet Union, and were intended merely to enable the United States to maintain its superiority in certain types of weapons. Now that you yourself have come to the conclusion that you need to carry out such tests, what has become of these arguments; what has become of that love of mankind of which you were so prodigal in your speeches and messages?

Who will new nuclear tests benefit, considering that throughout the post-war years the United States has been building up enormous stockpiles of nuclear weapons? It is obvious that they will benefit the monopolists who profit from the arms race and whose desire for gain outweighs any dangers connected with the contamination of the atmosphere, of water or the soil from radioactive fall-out.

But the people of the United States of America, like the people of all other nations, can only suffer from this policy that is being carried out in the interests of monopolistic capital. On the one hand, nuclear weapons are produced, and the monopolists profit from the accumulation of nuclear stockpiles. On the other hand, by instilling a fear of these weapons in the people of the world, and by no means least of all the people of their own country, the monopolists profit from the construction of fall-out shelters. In this way the monopolies fleece and ruthlessly exploit the people.

It is thus apparent that all talk of humanitarianism and love of mankind stops as soon as the profits of the monopolies are affected.

You and your allies in the various aggressive blocs justify your decision to resume nuclear weapons tests on the ground that such tests have been conducted by the Soviet Union. This argument does not hold water, for the whole world knows that the atomic bomb was first made by the United States of America and that, in addition, the first nuclear weapons tests were carried out by the United States of America. Furthermore, the United States not only conducted tests in the atmosphere but also exploded atomic bombs over the Japanese cities of Nagasaki and

Hiroshima. It was the United States, and the United States alone, that forced the Soviet Union, for the sake of ensuring its own security, to embark on the manufacture and stockpiling of nuclear weapons.

If, therefore, we are to be logical and to make a sincere effort to achieve mutual understanding and agreement on a system of disarmament based on equality of rights, then we must admit that the Soviet Union should be the last side to complete nuclear weapons testing. The testing carried out by the Soviet Union has from the very beginning been merely a counter-measure to the nuclear armaments race dictated by the Western Powers.

You announced in your speech, Mr. President, that the United States will begin conducting tests in the atmosphere in the latter part of April. But the fact is that you have already given the order for the tests to begin and are putting them off for one and a half to two months merely, as is evident, to prepare the public of the world for the effort of swallowing this bitter pill.

You understand, of course, that if the United States begins carrying out test explosions of nuclear weapons, then the Soviet Union, for the sake of its own security and of world peace, will inevitably be forced to meet this challenge too by carrying out its own series of new tests. For we have the technical means for doing this, and they are at least equal to yours. By your testing, therefore, you will be starting a new lap in the race for the creation of lethal weapons. What we should like to do, however, is to compete with the United States and other friendly States in creating better conditions for peaceful living and to join forces in the cause of ensuring world peace.

The decision of the United States Government to conduct a new series of nuclear tests will spur on the improvement and stockpiling of precisely those types of modern weapons that present the greatest danger, namely, atomic and hydrogen bombs, nuclear rocket warheads and rockets themselves. What, then, it may be asked, will there be to agree on at the disarmament negotiations? Surely not the number of machine-guns and rifles to be scrapped or the size of the reduction to be made in the forces guarding the arsenals where increasing supplies of nuclear weapons and rockets will continue to be stockpiled?

Perhaps the Soviet Union is expected to state whether it will be willing, before nuclear testing is begun by the United States in April, to agree to the terms, already rejected by us, of an agreement which, behind a camouflage of international control to ensure the cessation of testing, would lead to the creation of an extensive system of intelligence and espionage. I hope that this is not what is expected of us, because that would look very much like atomic blackmail. You are well aware, I am sure, that such methods applied to the Soviet Union have never benefited anyone in the past and will be fruitless either now or in the future.

Thus, for the statesmen of those countries in particular which bear the main responsibility for the preservation of peace, the United States Government's decision to carry out a new series of nuclear tests raises very serious questions, among which is the question of what prospects lie in store for the eighteen-nation Disarmament Committee. I consider it my duty to speak to you frankly about all these matters.

I am convinced that the relentless increase in the power of nuclear armaments can be stopped. This, indeed, is the purpose of our recent proposals, with which you are familiar, for the cessation of nuclear weapons tests. The conclusion of an agreement on the cessation of nuclear tests, instead of their resumption, would be a manifestation of precisely that prudent policy of which you speak in your message.

I have the honour to be, etc.

N. KHRUSHCHEV

3 March 1962
