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QUESTION OF DISARMAMENT

LETTER DATED 18 SEPTEMBER 1958 FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE
DELEGATION OF THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS,
ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

New York, 18 September 1958

The USSR delegation, on the instructions of the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, hereby submits for consideration by the thirteenth session of the United Nations General Assembly a memorandum of the Soviet Government on measures in the field of disarmament.

I would ask you to have this memorandum issued and circulated as an official document of the thirteenth session of the General Assembly.

(Signed)

A. GROMYKO
Head of the Delegation of the
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

MEMORANDUM

OF THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT ON MEASURES IN THE
FIELD OF DISARMAMENT

The Soviet Government, steadfastly adhering to the general line of its foreign policy which is directed towards the peaceful coexistence of States, stands firmly in favour of maintaining and consolidating universal peace and continues, as before, to advocate a positive solution of the disarmament problem. The Soviet Union has done and is continuing to do everything within its power to remove the danger of war and to establish co-operation between States irrespective of their social order.

The Soviet Government has dismantled the military bases which it possessed after World War II on the Territory of other States. In the last three years the numerical strength of Soviet armed forces has been reduced unilaterally by a total of 2,140,000 men. Furthermore, the armed forces of the USSR stationed in the German Democratic Republic have been reduced by 90,000 men and the Soviet troops stationed in the Romanian People's Republic have been withdrawn. Military expenditure and armaments have been correspondingly reduced. On 31 March 1958 the Soviet Union decided unilaterally to discontinue all tests of atomic and hydrogen weapons.

With a view to the adoption of measures to ease international tension and eliminate the "cold war", the Soviet Government as far back as December 1957 proposed a high level conference of leading statesmen of East and West and put forward for consideration at that conference certain questions, including a number of urgent disarmament questions, which offered real prospects of a solution. Unfortunately, this proposal came up against numerous obstacles created by the Western Powers and, consequently, no such conference has yet been convened.

Despite the efforts of the Soviet Union and other peace-loving States the arms race is continuing at an unabated pace. Moreover, with every passing day it is assuming an ever more threatening nature. There is a constant increase in appropriations for the manufacture of armaments, and first and foremost of atomic and rocket weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. Despite the

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unilateral discontinuance by the Soviet Union of tests of all types of atomic and hydrogen weapons, the United States and the United Kingdom are going on with such tests and are putting forward various conditions that prevent the conclusion of an agreement on the discontinuance of these tests. Many countries in Western Europe, North Africa and the Far East are being covered with a network of atomic and rocket bases. It is obvious that such measures in fact amount to no less than the preparation for war. The same purpose is served by the propaganda of war, hostility, alienation and hatred among nations which is being carried on in certain countries.

The arms race is highly prejudicial to the peoples of the world, for it burdens the budgets of States, systematically lowers the standard of living of the population and slows down the economic development of many countries. Without a positive solution of the disarmament problem the peoples cannot feel that they are spared from the threat of war involving the use of weapons of mass destruction. The solution of the disarmament problems would constitute a most important factor in easing international tension, putting an end to the "cold war" and ensuring the peace and security of all States.

This is precisely why the peoples are ever more imperatively demanding that immediate measures should be taken to halt the arms race, reduce the armed forces and armaments of States and ban atomic and hydrogen weapons. They cannot reconcile themselves to the situation that the disarmament problem is still unsolved. There is no agreement among States even with regard to separate aspects of the disarmament question and partial measures of disarmament, let alone an agreement which would embrace all aspects of the problem.

The Soviet Union advocates, as always, a solution to the disarmament problem which would take account of the legitimate interests of all countries and would not place any one State in an unequal position from the point of view of its security.

The Soviet Government believes that the task of consolidating peace calls above all for a radical solution of the disarmament problem, the substantial reduction of armed forces and armaments and the complete prohibition of atomic and hydrogen weapons, together with the cessation of their manufacture, their elimination from the arsenals of States and the destruction of all stockpiles

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of these weapons. As the USSR Government has repeatedly stated, it is prepared to conclude such an agreement. In view of the fact, however, that the Governments of the United States, the United Kingdom and France are not prepared to agree to broad measures on disarmament, the Soviet Government considers that agreement must be reached on partial measures in the field of disarmament on the basis of the propositions outlined below, so that practical measures of disarmament can be carried out as soon as possible.

1. Reduction of armed forces

The Soviet Government believes that there must be a substantial reduction of armed forces and, taking into account the position of the Western Powers, it proposes that the armed forces of the USSR and the United States should be reduced to the level of 1.7 million men and those of the United Kingdom and France to the level of 650,000 men each.

If the other great Powers agree, the Soviet Government would deem it desirable to establish the still lower levels for the armed forces of the USSR and the United States which were proposed earlier by the Soviet Union, namely, 1 to 1.5 million men.

In their proposals the Western Powers spoke of reducing armed forces in three stages to the following levels: in the case of the United States and the USSR, 2.5 million men at the first stage; 2.1 million men at the second stage; 1.7 million men at the third stage. It was proposed to reduce the armed forces of the United Kingdom and France to the following levels: 750,000 men at the first stage; 700,000 men at the second stage and 650,000 men at the third stage.

The Soviet Government agreed that the reduction of the armed forces of the great Powers should be carried out in accordance with these three stages. In so doing, the Soviet Government proceeds on the assumption that the agreement between the Powers should provide for clear-cut and definite commitments on the reduction of the armed forces at all three stages and that the transition from one stage to another should not be made contingent on the solution of various political issues. To make the implementation of measures to reduce armed forces contingent on the solution of various political issues is to deprive the commitments of States to reduce their armed forces of any real meaning.

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2. Reduction of conventional armaments and military budgets

The Soviet Government advocates a considerable reduction in the armaments and military budgets of States. For this purpose it proposes as a first step the reduction of conventional armaments by 15 per cent. The Soviet Government is ready to consider yet another approach to the reduction of armaments - namely the exchange of lists of armaments to be reduced, as suggested in the proposals submitted by the Governments of the United States and other Western Powers.

Since the rise in military expenditures has already seriously disrupted the economy of a number of States and is substantially lowering the standards of living of the population, the question of reducing military budgets acquires great urgency and an immediate solution is called for. The reduction of the military budgets and, consequently, the military expenditures of States would mean that the funds thus released would be channelled into developing the peaceful branches of the economy, raising the level of employment and enhancing the well-being of the peoples.

The Soviet Government believes it necessary that, as the States possessing the most powerful armed forces, the United States, the USSR, the United Kingdom and France, in the first instance, should assume an obligation to reduce their military budgets by 10 to 15 per cent, and should allocate a part of the savings so effected for broad economic assistance to the under-developed countries. The Soviet Government proposes that the question of such a reduction of military budgets by the said States should be considered as a separate, independent item on the agenda of the thirteenth session of the United Nations General Assembly.

3. Prohibition of atomic and hydrogen weapons

In view of the particular danger presented by atomic and hydrogen weapons because of their tremendous destructive power, the Soviet Government is of the opinion that the complete prohibition of atomic and hydrogen weapons, the cessation of their manufacture, their elimination from the arsenals of States and the destruction of all stockpiles of these weapons would be in the interests of ensuring a lasting peace and removing the threat of atomic war. However, since the Western Powers are not at present ready to agree to the complete and unconditional prohibition of nuclear weapons the Soviet Government believes that,

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as a first step toward the prohibition of atomic and hydrogen weapons, States should assume a solemn obligation to renounce the use of nuclear weapons of all types including aerial bombs, rockets of all ranges carrying atomic and hydrogen warheads, atomic artillery, etc.

The obligation of States to renounce the use of all types of atomic and hydrogen weapons should come into force simultaneously with the initial implementation of measures to reduce armed forces and conventional armaments.

The Soviet Government feels in duty bound to draw attention to the fact that the transfer of nuclear weapons to other States as well as the stationing of atomic military units, the stockpiling of nuclear weapons and the construction of atomic and rocket bases in foreign territories increases the danger of the outbreak of atomic war and deepens the suspicions with which international relations are bedevilled. Such actions may compel States whose security is threatened to retaliate. Nor can the fact be ignored that States which permit the stationing of atomic and rocket weapons in their territory are actually turning it into a springboard for atomic war with all the grave consequences for the peoples that this entails.

The Soviet Government considers it essential that the States possessing nuclear weapons should undertake not to allow atomic military units or any types of nuclear weapons to be stationed outside their national frontiers and not to transfer these weapons to other States or to the High Commands of military blocs.

An important step towards removing the danger of atomic war and easing international tension would be the creation in central Europe of a zone free from atomic, hydrogen and rocket weapons in accordance with the proposal of the Polish People's Republic. The objections that have so far been raised in connexion with this proposal are artificial and cannot be considered at all convincing.

In order to ensure the effective implementation of the proposal to establish an atom-free zone not only would appropriate obligations have to be assumed by the States in the zone, but the Powers whose armies are equipped with atomic and rocket weapons would have, on their part, to undertake to respect the status of the atom-free zone and regard the territory of the States in it as excluded from the sphere of use of atomic, hydrogen and rocket weapons. Pending the conclusion

of an agreement on the complete prohibition of nuclear weapons and their elimination from the arsenals of States, the Soviet Government is ready to assume such an obligation if the Governments of the United States, the United Kingdom and France do likewise.

The Soviet Government considers it necessary to achieve the complete prohibition of atomic and hydrogen weapons, the cessation of their production, their elimination from the arsenals of States and the destruction of all stockpiles. The Government of the USSR has already repeatedly stated its readiness to enter into negotiations to this end with the Western Powers. In view of the fact that the Western Powers are not ready at this juncture to accept such a radical solution of the problem of prohibiting nuclear weapons, the Soviet Government proposes the implementation at this stage of those measures on which agreement can be reached now and, in particular, the adoption of a decision on the immediate and general discontinuance of atomic and hydrogen weapons tests and the renunciation by States of the use of these weapons.

The carrying out of these measures would create favourable conditions for further steps towards the complete and unconditional prohibition of nuclear weapons. The Soviet Government considers it necessary that, together with the implementation of partial measures of disarmament, States should undertake to enter into negotiations to work out an agreement on the complete prohibition of atomic and hydrogen weapons, the cessation of their production and their elimination from the arsenals of States.

4. Discontinuance of atomic and hydrogen weapons tests

The Soviet Government steadfastly maintains its position that an immediate and general discontinuance of atomic and hydrogen weapons tests is essential. The need for a general discontinuance of nuclear tests is dictated by the fact that the continuation of nuclear test explosions creates a great hazard to the health of human beings and intensifies the race to produce still more terrible and effective weapons of mass destruction.

Desiring to make a practical start towards a general discontinuance of nuclear tests, the Soviet Union unilaterally discontinued, as from 31 March 1958, all atomic and hydrogen weapons tests and called upon the United States and the United Kingdom to follow suit. In taking this decision, the Supreme Soviet of

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the USSR stated that, if other Powers possessing atomic and hydrogen weapons continued tests of those weapons, the Government of the USSR would be free to act in the matter of the carrying out of nuclear weapons tests by the Soviet Union in accordance with those circumstances, having regard to the interests of its security.

The results of the conference of experts at Geneva have confirmed the Soviet Government's view that it is completely possible to establish effective control over the discontinuance by all States of atomic and hydrogen weapons tests. Now there can be no excuse or justification for refusing the immediate and general discontinuance of nuclear tests. The interests of the peace and security of the peoples require that the Governments of the United States and the United Kingdom also undertake immediately to discontinue tests of nuclear weapons and thereby ensure the discontinuance of such tests everywhere and for all time.

The Soviet Government believes that the thirteenth session of the General Assembly should consider the question of the discontinuance by all States of nuclear weapons tests as an urgent, top-priority agenda item.

5. The banning of the use of cosmic space for military purposes, the elimination of foreign bases on the territories of other countries and international co-operation in the study of cosmic space

An agreement on the complete and unconditional prohibition of atomic and hydrogen weapons, including a cut-off of the production of such weapons and their elimination from the armaments of States, would make it possible to direct scientific and technical progress in rocket construction and the building of intercontinental ballistic missiles and artificial earth satellites into channels of peaceful use for the benefit of the people.

Since the position of the Western Powers bars any such agreement at the present time, the Soviet Government proposes that an understanding should be sought on measures which would preclude the use of cosmic space for military purposes. A solution of this problem is possible only if the security interests of all States are taken into account. This could be done by the application of such measures as the prohibition of the use of cosmic space for military purposes

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and the simultaneous elimination of foreign military bases on the territories of other countries, particularly the countries of Europe, the Near and Middle East and North Africa, as provided in the relevant proposals of the Soviet Government of 15 March 1958.

The application of such measures would open up the prospect of developing the very broadest international co-operation in the study and conquest of cosmic space for peaceful purposes.

Having regard to the importance of this problem, the Soviet Government has placed it on the agenda of the thirteenth session of the General Assembly as a separate item.

6. International control and measures for the prevention of a surprise attack

The implementation of disarmament measures should be placed under suitable international control. The Soviet Government proceeds from the assumption that if the parties are guided not by considerations of propaganda but by the actually existing conditions, the functions and scope of control directly depend on the prevailing state of international relations and on the character and importance of the disarmament measures to be carried out. This means that the functions and scope of control and inspection should be viewed in close connexion with the application of measures for the easing of tension in international relations and the strengthening of confidence among States, above all among the great Powers. As an understanding is gradually reached on disarmament problems, including agreement on a substantial reduction of armed forces and armaments and on the complete prohibition of nuclear weapons, including a cut-off of their production, their elimination from the arsenals of States and the destruction of stockpiles of such weapons, the obstacles to an expansion of control and inspection will disappear. The Soviet Government, for its part, will be prepared to take up a positive attitude toward such expansion at the appropriate stage.

The Soviet Government attaches great importance to the achievement of agreement on measures to avert the danger of a surprise attack by one State on another. Proceeding from a sober analysis of the relations now existing between States, the Soviet Government considers that a realistic approach is to solve

the problem of the prevention of a surprise attack gradually, in relation to the character of the disarmament steps during the initial stage.

On this basis, the Soviet Government proposes that agreement should be sought on the establishment of control posts at railway junctions, large ports and main motor highways and also on the taking of aerial photographs in the zone where the principal armed forces of the two military groups are concentrated in Europe to a depth of 800 kilometres east and west of the demarcation line between these forces. The Soviet Government also agrees to the establishment of a zone of aerial inspection, including the far-eastern part of USSR territory and a portion of the western territory of the United States of equal size.

Inasmuch as partial measures are under discussion at the present time, the Soviet Government proposes that control posts should be set up only in the western frontier regions of the Soviet Union, in the territory of France, the United Kingdom and other signatories of the North Atlantic Treaty and the Warsaw Treaty, and also in the eastern part of the United States. Control posts may also be established in the territories of other States situated in the zone of aerial photography (by agreement with the States concerned).

The Soviet Government considers that in attempting to deal with the question of measures to prevent a surprise attack the necessary approach must be one which will lead to the removal, not the deepening, of suspicion between States. This will be possible if the solution of the problem of preventing a surprise attack is approached not with the idea of gaining military advantages for any country or group of countries, but with the object of strengthening peace and security throughout the world.

In the present international situation, when the armaments race continues, leading to increased mistrust and suspicion in relations between States, the proposal for a mutual aerial inspection of all United States and USSR territories is unrealistic. It must also be remembered that this proposal excludes from aerial inspection the territories of certain NATO countries and of a number of other countries in which military bases of States belonging to military groupings of the Western Powers are situated. The Soviet Union, whose territory it is proposed to open for aerial inspection, is thus placed on a footing of inequality.

The question of aerial inspection of all USSR and United States territories cannot be viewed in isolation from measures for the relaxation of international tension and the strengthening of confidence among States, above all among the

great Powers. The Soviet Government considers that such a measure can be carried out only in the final stage of disarmament - when a settlement has been reached of the problem of a complete prohibition of atomic and hydrogen weapons, their elimination from the arsenals of States, a substantial reduction of armed forces and the elimination of foreign military bases on the territories of other countries, i.e. when relations of real confidence between States have been established.

The proposal for the establishment of a zone of aerial inspection in the Arctic, which has been advanced as an alternative, is also unacceptable. It does nothing to remove the possibility of a surprise attack on the Soviet Union. It relates merely to one sector of the frontiers of the Soviet Union and leaves aside other areas in Europe, Africa, etc. containing military bases of the Western Powers from which an attack on the USSR may be launched. It is common knowledge that in Europe, in North Africa, in the Near and Far East and in other regions of the world there are not a few such military bases. Moreover, the Arctic zone of aerial inspection proposed by the United States, while embracing a substantial part of the territory of the Soviet Union, does not include an inch of actual United States territory.

No self-respecting State can agree to a proposal which, without removing the danger of surprise attack, would reduce its ability to defend itself from such attack and to repulse an aggressor.

Having regard to the great importance of the question of measures to prevent the possibility of a surprise attack by one State against another, the Soviet Government has proposed that competent representatives, including those of the military departments, appointed by the Governments of the USSR, the United States as well as certain other States should meet to study jointly the practical aspects of this problem and to draft recommendations on measures to prevent the possibility of a surprise attack. The holding of such a conference, however, must not deflect the attention of the United Nations from the question of preventing a surprise attack. The United Nations must make its own contribution to the positive solution of this problem which is of great significance for the preservation of peace throughout the world.

7. Reduction of the number of foreign troops
stationed in the territory of Germany and
in other European States

The Soviet Government advocates the withdrawal of all troops from the territory of foreign States and proposes, as a first step, that an agreement should be sought on the reduction by one-third, or in some other proportion agreed by the parties, of the armed forces of the USSR, the United States, the United Kingdom, France and other States stationed at present in the territory of Germany, and on the withdrawal of the excess contingents to their own national territory.

The Soviet Government believes that an agreed reduction of the armed forces stationed in the territory of Germany, where the concentration of troops and armaments of the two groups of Powers situated in direct proximity to each other makes the danger of armed conflict particularly acute, would in itself be of great significance for a relaxation of tension in Europe and would help to clear the international atmosphere in general.

The Soviet Government is convinced that an agreement to reduce the armed forces of the United States, the United Kingdom and France stationed in the territory of NATO countries and the armed forces of the USSR stationed in the territory of the Warsaw Treaty countries would be of great importance for the alleviation of international tension. The extent of such reduction could be specified in subsequent negotiations.

8. Prohibition of war propaganda

The propaganda of war and incitement to war conducted in certain countries, especially agitation for the use of atomic and hydrogen weapons against certain States, poisons relations between States and helps to spread enmity and hatred among the nations. The cessation of war propaganda, including agitation for atomic war, would play an important part in improving relations between States and in clearing the international atmosphere.

The Soviet Government believes that war propaganda and the fomenting of hostility among nations must be brought to an end both through the enactment of appropriate legislation by States, as has been done in the Soviet Union and some other countries, and through the adoption of other measures for the cessation of such propaganda.

9. The United Nations Disarmament Commission

The Soviet Government is ready to conduct negotiations on disarmament both at a conference at the highest level and within the United Nations. However, the composition of the United Nations body which is to draft practical disarmament measures must be representative and not one-sided.

The Soviet Government believes that the work of the Disarmament Commission can be successful only if it is based on mutually acceptable principles and if the negotiations are conducted fairly and on a footing of equality. This requirement would be met by the creation of a permanent disarmament commission to include all Members of the United Nations, which would allow all States, large and small, to take an active part in the consideration of disarmament questions vitally affecting their interests, or of a more narrowly constituted commission the composition of which would preclude a one-sided approach to disarmament questions. The requirements of fruitful work aimed at achieving a mutually acceptable agreement on disarmament would be met by a commission not less than one-half of whose membership would consist of representatives of socialist and neutral States.

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The Soviet Government expresses the hope that its proposals on partial disarmament measures will be duly considered by the thirteenth session of the General Assembly and that the other Members of the United Nations, for their part, will contribute to the achievement of a mutually acceptable agreement on disarmament.
