Letter to Nikolai Bulganin

Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

from President Eisenhower

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Text of President Eisenhower's Letter

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: When on December 10 I received your communication, I promptly acknowledged it with the promise that I would in due course give you a considered reply. I now do so.

Your communication seems to fall into three parts: the need for peace; your contention that peace is endangered by the collective self-defense efforts of free world nations; and your specific proposals. I shall respond in that same order and make my own proposals.

I.

Peace and good will among men have been the heartfelt desire of peoples since time immemorial. But professions of peace by governmental leaders have not always been a dependable guide to their actual intentions. Moreover, it seems to me to

be profitless for us to debate the question of which of our two governments wants peace the more. Both of us have asserted that our respective peoples ardently desire peace and perhaps you and I feel this same urge equally. The heart of the matter becomes the determination of the terms on which the maintenance of peace can be assured, and the confidence that each of us can justifiably feel that these terms will be respected.

In the United States the people and their government desire peace and in this country the people exert such constitutional control over government that no government could possibly initiate aggressive war. Under authority already given by our Congress, the United States can and would respond at once if we or any of our allies were attacked. But the United States cannot initiate war without the prior approval of the peoples' representatives in the Congress. This process requires time and public debate. Not only would our people repudiate any effort to begin an attack, but the element of surprise, so important in any aggressive move, would be wholly lacking. Aggressive war by us is not only abhorrent; it is impractical and impossible.

The past forty years provide an opportunity to judge the comparative peace records of our two

systems. We gladly submit our national record for respecting peace to the impartial judgment of mankind. I can assure you, Mr. Chairman, that in the United States the waging of peace has priority in every aspect, and every element, of our national life.

II.

You argue that the danger of war is increased because the United States and other free world nations seek security on a collective basis and on the basis of military preparedness. Three times in this century wars have occurred under circumstances which strongly suggest, if indeed they do not prove, that war would not have occurred had the United States been militarily strong and committed in advance to the defense of nations that were attacked.

On each of these three occasions when war came, the United States was militarily unprepared, or ill-prepared, and it was not known that the United States would go to the aid of those subjected to armed aggression. Yet now it appears, Mr. Chairman, that you contend that weakness and disunity would make war less likely.

I may be permitted perhaps to recall that in March 1939, when the Soviet Union felt relatively weak and threatened by Fascist aggression,

it contended that aggression was rife because "the majority of the non-aggressive countries, particularly England and France, have rejected the policy of collective security", and Stalin went on to say that the policy of "Let each country defend itself as it likes and as best it can . . . means conniving at aggression, giving free rein to war."

Now the Soviet Union is no longer weak or confronted by powerful aggressive forces. The vast Sino-Soviet bloc embraces nearly one billion people and large resources. Such a bloc would of course be dominant in the world were the free world nations to be disunited.

It is natural that any who want to impose their system on the world should prefer that those outside that system should be weak and divided. But that expansionist policy cannot be sanctified by protestations of peace.

Of course the United States would greatly prefer it if collective security could be obtained on a universal basis through the United Nations.

This was the hope when in 1945 our two governments and others signed the Charter of the United Nations, conferring upon its Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Also, by that Charter we agreed to make available to the Security Council armed forces, assistance and

facilities so that the Council could maintain and restore international peace and security.

The Soviet Union has persistently prevented the establishment of such a universal collective security system and has, by its use of the veto—now 82 times—made the Security Council undependable as a protector of the peace.

The possibility that the Security Council might become undependable was feared at the San Francisco Conference on World Organization, and accordingly the Charter recognized that, in addition to reliance on the Security Council, the nations possessed and might exercise an inherent right of collective self-defense. It has therefore been found not only desirable but necessary, if the free nations are to be secure and safe, to concert their defensive measures.

I can and do give you, Mr. Chairman, two solemn and categorical assurances.

(1) *Never* will the United States lend its support to any aggressive action by any collective defense organization or any member thereof;

(2) *Always* will the United States be ready to move toward the development of effective United Nations collective security measures in replacement of regional collective defense measures.

I turn now to consider your specific proposals.

III.

I am compelled to conclude after the most careful study of your proposals that they seem to be unfortunately inexact or incomplete in their meaning and inadequate as a program for productive negotiations for peace.

You first seem to assume that the obligations of the Charter are non-existent and that the voice of the United Nations is nothing that we need to heed.

You suggest that we should agree to respect the independence of the countries of the Near and Middle East and renounce the use of force in the settlement of questions relating to the Near and Middle East. But by the Charter of the United Nations we have already taken precisely those obligations as regards all countries, including those of the Near and Middle East. Our profound hope is that the Soviets feel themselves as bound by the provisions of the Charter as, I assure you, we feel bound.

You also suggest submitting to the member states of NATO and the Warsaw Pact some form of non-aggression agreement. But all of the members of NATO are already bound to the United Nations Charter provision against aggression.

You suggest that the United States, the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union should undertake

not to use *nuclear* weapons. But our three nations and others have already undertaken, by the Charter, not to use *any* weapons against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state. Our profound hope is that no weapons will be used by any country for such an indefensible purpose and that the Soviet Union will feel a similar aversion to any kind of aggression.

You suggest that we should proclaim our intention to develop between us relations of friendship and peaceful cooperation. Such an intention is indeed already proclaimed as between ourselves and others by the Charter of the United Nations to which we have subscribed. The need is, not to repeat what we already proclaim, but, Mr. Chairman, to take concrete steps under the present terms of the Charter, that will bring about these relations of friendship and peaceful cooperation. As recently as last November, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union signed and proclaimed to the world a declaration which was designed to promote the triumph of Communism throughout the world by every means not excluding violence, and which contained many slanderous references to the United States. I am bound to point out that such a declaration is difficult to reconcile with professions of a desire for friendship or indeed of peaceful coexistence. This declara-

tion makes clear where responsibility for the "Cold War" lies.

You propose that we broaden the ties between us of a "scientific cultural and athletic" character. But already our two countries are negotiating for peaceful contacts even broader than "scientific, cultural and athletic". We hope for a positive result, even though in 1955, after the Summit Conference, when negotiations for such contacts were pressed by our Foreign Ministers at Geneva, the accomplishments were zero. It is above all important that our peoples should learn the true facts about each other. An informed public opinion in both our countries is essential to the proper understanding of our discussions.

You propose that we develop "normal" trade relations as part of the "peaceful cooperation" of which you speak. We welcome trade that carries no political or warlike implications. We do have restrictions on dealings in goods which are of war significance, but we impose no obstacles to peaceful trade.

Your remaining proposals relate to armament. In this connection, I note with deep satisfaction that you oppose "competition in the production of ever newer types of weapons". When I read that statement I expected to go on to read proposals to stop such production. But I was disappointed.

You renew the oft-repeated Soviet proposal that the United States, the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union should cease for two or three years to test nuclear weapons; and you suggest that nuclear weapons should not be stationed or produced in Germany. You add the possibility that Poland and Czechoslovakia might be added to this non-nuclear weapons area.

These proposals do not serve to meet the real problem of armament. The heart of that problem is, as you say, the mounting *production*, primarily by the Soviet Union and the United States, of new types of weapons.

Your proposal regarding Central Europe will of course be studied by NATO and the NATO countries directly involved from the standpoint of its military and political implications. But there cannot be great significance in de-nuclearizing a small area when, as you say, "the range of modern types of weapons does not know of any geographical limit", and when you defer to the indefinite future any measures to stop the production of such weapons.

I note, furthermore, that your proposal on Germany is in no way related to the ending of the division of that country but would, in fact,

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tend to perpetuate that division. It is unrealistic thus to ignore the basic link between political solutions and security arrangements.

Surely, Mr. Chairman, at a time when we share great responsibility for shaping the development of the international situation, we can and must do better than what you propose.

In this spirit, I submit some proposals of my own.

IV.

(1) I propose that we strengthen the United Nations.

This organization and the pledges of its members embodied in the Charter constitute man's best hope for peace and justice. The United States feels bound by its solemn undertaking to act in accordance with the Principles of the Charter. Will not the Soviet Union clear away the doubt that it also feels bound by its Charter undertakings? And may we not perhaps go further and build up the authority of the United Nations?

Too often its recommendations go unheeded.

I propose, Mr. Chairman, that we should rededicate ourselves to the United Nations, its Principles and Purposes and to our Charter obligations. But I would do more.

Too often the Security Council is prevented, by veto, from discharging the primary responsibility we have given it for the maintenance of international peace and security. This prevention even extends to proposing procedures for the pacific settlement of disputes.

I propose that we should make it the policy of our two governments at least not to use veto power to prevent the Security Council from proposing methods for the pacific settlement of disputes pursuant to Chapter VI.

Nothing, I am convinced, would give the world more justifiable hope than the conviction that both of our governments are genuinely determined to make the United Nations the effective instrument of peace and justice that was the original design.

(2) If confidence is to be restored, there needs, above all, to be confidence in the pledged word. To us it appears that such confidence is lamentably lacking. That is conspicuously so in regard to two areas where the situation is a cause of grave international concern.

I refer first of all to Germany. This was the principal topic of our meeting of July 1955 and the only substantive agreement which was recorded in our agreed Directive was this:

> The Heads of Government, recognizing their common responsibility for the settlement of the German question

and the re-unification of Germany, have agreed the settlement of the German question and the re-unification of Germany by means of free elections shall be carried out in conformity with the national interests of the German people and the interests of European security.

In spite of our urging, your government has, for now two and one half years, taken no steps to carry out that agreement or to discharge that recognized responsibility. Germany remains forcibly divided.

This constitutes a great error, incompatible with European security. It also undermines confidence in the sanctity of our international agreements.

I therefore urge that we now proceed vigorously to bring about the reunification of Germany by free elections, as we agreed, and as the situation urgently demands.

I assure you that this act of simple justice and of good faith need not lead to any increased jeopardy of your nation. The consequences would be just the opposite and would surely lead to greater security. In connection with the reunification of Germany, the United States is prepared, along with others, to negotiate specific arrangements regarding force levels and deployments, and broad treaty undertakings, not merely against aggression but assuring positive reaction should aggression occur in Europe.

The second situation to which I refer is that of the countries of Eastern Europe. The Heads of our two Governments, together with the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, agreed in 1945 that the peoples of these countries should have the right to choose the form of government under which they would live, and that our three countries had a responsibility in this respect. The three of us agreed to foster the conditions under which these peoples could exercise their right of free choice.

That agreement has not as yet been fulfilled.

I know that your government is reluctant to discuss these matters or to treat them as a matter of international concern. But the Heads of Governments did agree at Yalta in 1945 that these matters *were* of international concern and we specifically agreed that there could appropriately be international consultation with reference to them.

This was another matter taken up at our meeting in Geneva in 1955. You then took the position that there were no grounds for discussing this question at our conference and that it would involve interference in the internal affairs of the Eastern European states.

But have not subsequent developments shown that I was justified in my appeal to you for con-

sideration of these matters? Surely the Hungarian developments and the virtually unanimous action of the United Nations General Assembly in relation thereto show that conditions in Eastern Europe are regarded throughout the world as much more than a matter of purely domestic scope.

I propose that we should now discuss this matter. There is an intrinsic need of this in the interest of peace and justice, which seems to me compelling.

(3) I now make, Mr. Chairman, a proposal to solve what I consider to be the most important problem which faces the world today.

(a) I propose that we agree that outer space should be used only for peaceful purposes. We face a decisive moment in history in relation to this matter. Both the Soviet Union and the United States are now using outer space for the testing of missiles designed for military purposes. The time to stop is now.

I recall to you that a decade ago, when the United States had a monopoly of atomic weapons and of atomic experience, we offered to renounce the making of atomic weapons and to make the use of atomic energy an international asset for peaceful purposes only. If only that offer had been accepted by the Soviet Union, there would

not now be the danger from nuclear weapons which you describe.

The nations of the world face today another choice perhaps even more momentous than that of 1948. That relates to the use of outer space. Let us this time, and in time, make the right choice, the peaceful choice.

There are about to be perfected and produced powerful new weapons which, availing of outer space, will greatly increase the capacity of the human race to destroy itself. If indeed it be the view of the Soviet Union that we should not go on producing ever newer types of weapons, can we not stop the production of such weapons which would use or, more accurately, misuse, outer space, now for the first time opening up as a field for man's exploration? Should not outer space be dedicated to the peaceful uses of mankind and denied to the purposes of war? That is my proposal.

(b) Let us also end the now unrestrained production of nuclear weapons. This too would be responsive to your urging against "the production of ever newer types of weapons". It is possible to assure that newly produced fissionable material should not be used for weapons purposes. Also existing weapons stocks can be steadily reduced by ascertainable transfers to peaceful purposes.

Since our existing weapons stocks are doubtless larger than yours we would expect to make a greater transfer than you to peaceful purposes stocks. I should be glad to receive your suggestion as to what you consider to be an equitable ratio in this respect.

(c) I propose that, as part of such a program which will reliably check and reverse the accumulation of nuclear weapons, we stop the testing of nuclear weapons, not just for two or three years, but indefinitely. So long as the accumulation of these weapons continues unchecked, it is better that we should be able to devise weapons which will be primarily significant from a military and defensive standpoint and progressively eliminate weapons which could destroy, through fall-out, vast segments of human life. But if the production is to be stopped and the trend reversed, as I propose, then testing is no longer so necessary.

(d) Let us at the same time take steps to begin the controlled and progressive reduction of conventional weapons and military manpower.

(e) I also renew my proposal that we begin progressively to take measures to guarantee against the possibility of surprise attack. I recall, Mr. Chairman, that we began to discuss this at our personal meeting two and a half years ago,

but nothing has happened although there is open a wide range of choices as to where to begin.

The capacity to verify the fulfillment of commitments is of the essence in all these matters, including the reduction of conventional forces and weapons, and it would surely be useful for us to study together through technical groups what are the possibilities in this respect upon which we could build if we then decide to do so. These technical studies could, if you wish, be undertaken without commitment as to ultimate acceptance, or as to the interdependence, of the propositions involved. It is such technical studies of the possibilities of verification and supervision that the United Nations has proposed as a first step. I believe that this is a first step that would promote hope in both of our countries and in the world. Therefore I urge that this first step be undertaken.

V.

I have noted your conclusion, Mr. Chairman, that you attach great importance to personal contact between statesmen and that you for your part would be prepared to come to an agreement on a personal meeting of state leaders to discuss both the problems mentioned in your letter and other problems.

I too believe that such personal contacts can be of value. I showed that by coming to Geneva in the summer of 1955. I have repeatedly stated that there is nothing I would not do to advance the cause of a just and durable peace.

But meetings between us do not automatically produce good results. Preparatory work, with good will on both sides, is a prerequisite to success. High level meetings, in which we both participate, create great expectations and for that reason involve a danger of disillusionment, dejection and increased distrust if in fact the meetings are ill-prepared, if they evade the root causes of danger, if they are used primarily for propaganda, or if agreements arrived at are not fulfilled.

Consequently, Mr. Chairman, this is my proposal:

I am ready to meet with the Soviet leaders to discuss the proposals mentioned in your letter and the proposals which I make, with the attendance as appropriate of leaders of other states which have recognized responsibilities in relation to one or another of the subjects we are to discuss. It would be essential that prior to such a meeting these complex matters should be worked on in advance through diplomatic channels and by our Foreign Ministers, so that the issues can be presented in form suitable for our decisions and

so that it can be ascertained that such a top-level meeting would, in fact, hold good hope of advancing the cause of peace and justice in the world. Arrangements should also be made for the appropriate inclusion, in the preparatory work, of other governments to which I allude.

I have made proposals which seem to me to be worthy of our attention and which correspond to the gravity of our times. They deal with the basic problems which press upon us and which if unresolved would make it ever more difficult to maintain the peace. The Soviet leaders by giving evidence of a genuine intention to resolve these basic problems can make an indispensable contribution to clearing away the obstacles to those friendly relations and peaceful pursuits which the peoples of all the world demand.

Sincerely,

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

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