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LETTER DATED 8 JULY 1960 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND TO
THE UNITED NATIONS, ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

New York, 8 July 1960

I have the honour on instructions from Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to transmit to you the enclosed text of a letter on the question of disarmament sent on 29 June 1960 by the Prime Minister, Mr. Harold Macmillan, to the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union, Mr. N.S. Khrushchev.

I should be grateful if this letter and its enclosure could be circulated to all Members of the United Nations as a document of the General Assembly and of the Disarmament Commission.

(Signed) Pierson DIXON

Letter dated 29 June from the Prime Minister
The Rt. Hon. Harold Macmillan, M.P., to the
Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the
Soviet Union, Mr. N.S. Khrushchev

Dear Mr. Chairman,

I was very sorry to read your letter of June 27 about the disarmament talks in Geneva. I must tell you frankly that I am deeply disappointed, as well as surprised, at your decision to withdraw from these negotiations. The Geneva Conference was set up as result of agreement between the four Foreign Ministers last August; it cannot be properly broken off by any one group. Even after your Delegate had said on June 27 that the Soviet side would not participate further in the Conference, our Delegate and those of other Western Governments went back to the Conference on June 28 in the hope that your side would reconsider their decision not to take part; but in vain. I think the whole world will be disappointed that the Conference cannot proceed with its work because of the Soviet Government's unwillingness to take further part in it.

You and I had important, and as I believe sincere talks together in Moscow about problems which divide the world today. We both agreed on the importance of the disarmament problem. We both know it is a most difficult problem to solve. You yourself have admitted the need for patient negotiation on it. The points you make in your latest letter seem to ignore all this.

Your letter severely criticizes the attitude of the Western Delegates. Even if these criticisms were warranted, it would not, in my view, justify your action in breaking off the Geneva talks. I cannot emphasize too strongly that we want to reach an agreement on disarmament. We for our part do not agree with many of the points which your Delegate has put forward at Geneva, as you do not agree with ours. But the whole purpose of negotiations is to try to eliminate points of difference and find common ground. It seems to us that some progress was being made. And it was well known that the Western Delegates hoped soon to put new proposals to the Conference which would take into account points made during previous proceedings, including your new plan. Yet at this very moment you chose to break off negotiations, as if you did not want to know what we were going to propose. Frankly I find this incomprehensible.

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In your letter you say that the Western Delegates have been carrying on futile and endless discussions. You describe the plan which the Western Delegates put forward in March as amounting only to "legalized military espionage". This is most unfair. You know yourself that the most difficult thing about disarmament measures is control over them. And you yourself in your letter to which I am replying describe your own plan as one for "disarmament under effective international control".

You also refer to the recent visit of our Defence Minister to the United States. Until agreement on disarmament is reached we intend to maintain our collective defence arrangements. There is nothing provocative in this. You do the same.

You have also rehearsed in your letter recent developments in disarmament negotiations. We see them as follows. In September last year both the Soviet and British Governments presented to the United Nations General Assembly almost simultaneously separate plans for comprehensive disarmament. We thought this was a good one. You thought the same of yours.

Mr. Selwyn Lloyd spoke on September 17 and you next day. Lloyd said our aim was to move forward by balanced stages towards abolition of all nuclear weapons of mass destruction and towards reduction of other weapons and armed forces to levels which will rule out the possibility of aggressive war. I thought this indication of how to attain general and complete disarmament corresponded to your own declared objectives.

After these plans had been put forward in the United Nations it was unanimously decided to refer them to the Ten-Power Conference. This process started on March 15 when a more detailed Western plan was presented, and discussion was adjourned on April 29 for the Summit. The Conference resumed on June 7 when you presented your new plan. You claimed that this plan included features which took account of Western views. This surely proves that neither our original plan nor the Conference meetings could have been as sterile as you now suggest. I told you in my last letter that we would consider your plan most carefully and like you we thought it best for it to be discussed in the

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Ten-Power Conference. It had been under discussion for not quite three weeks when you broke off before giving us a chance in our turn to make fresh proposals to you which would take into account your new proposals, even though it was known to your Delegate that we were about to do so.

That is the situation as I see it. I hope you will reconsider your decision in the light of the views I am now expressing so that negotiations on disarmament can be restarted as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

Harold Macmillan
