

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER (RT. HON. R.G. MENZIES)

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WEDNESDAY, 13TH SEPTEMBER, 1961.

NUCLEAR TESTS

On 7th September I made some observations on the resumption by the Soviet Union of nuclear bomb testing, and said that I might make a further statement this week. I should like now to trace in more detail the course of negotiation on this most important question, and to examine some of its implications for us.

Early Western Proposals Rejected by U.S.S.R.:

It was in July, 1957, that the Western Powers on the Sub-Committee of the United Nations Disarmament Commission first proposed that a group of experts meet to devise an inspection system to control the suspension of nuclear tests. The Soviet Union did not respond.

The following month the Western Powers proposed the suspension of nuclear tests for two years, during which time a system of international inspection could be worked out to ensure that all future production of fissionable material would be used solely for peaceful purposes. In making these proposals, the Western Powers again called on the Soviet Union to join in expert studies. The Soviet Union refused.

In November, 1957, these proposals were endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly but the Soviet Union still refused to discuss them.

Not until March, 1958, after Russia had concluded a series of tests, and just before the start of a United States series, did the Soviet Union announce that it would suspend tests unilaterally for six months. The West pointed out that unilateral declarations, without a system of inspection and control to ensure that the declarations were being honoured, were valueless; and called again on the Soviet Union to take part in technical discussion on the feasibility of devising an effective system and the form it might take. This time the Soviet Union agreed.

The Conference of Experts, 1958:

So, in July and August, 1958, the first conference of experts met in Geneva. The experts, including the Russian experts, concluded that it was possible to devise a practicable system for detecting violations of an agreement to suspend nuclear weapons tests. The United Kingdom and the United States thereupon announced that they were prepared to suspend tests for one year from 31st October, 1958, on certain conditions. One was that negotiations should begin on that date for the conclusion of a treaty on the suspension of tests under effective international control. Another was that Russia should not resume testing.

Opening of Negotiations, October, 1958:

The Conference opened at Geneva on 31st October, 1958. On 1st November - the very next day - the Soviet Union exploded an atomic device. Two days later it exploded another. Despite this flagrant breach of faith, the United States declared that it would adhere to its undertaking, provided the Soviet Union refrained from further testing.

From that time, nearly three years ago, the negotiations have continued, with occasional adjournments, and they are still technically continuing: despite the Soviet resumption of testing they have still not formally been broken

off. Progress has been slow. From the beginning it was apparent that Western and Soviet views on what constituted an adequate, reliable and acceptable treaty were very far apart. But by painstaking persistence, with the United Kingdom and the United States making every effort of compromise to break deadlocks, the areas of fundamental disagreement were perceptibly narrowed.

Adjournment of Conference, December 1960:

When the Conference adjourned in December, 1960, in the last days of the Eisenhower Administration, there had been adopted a preamble and seventeen articles of a draft treaty, and two annexes.

Important differences on issues of principle still remained unresolved, but the progress which had already been made encouraged the hope that with perseverance agreement could yet be reached on the outstanding points. 'With perseverance', I have said: perhaps I should have added 'and with goodwill and sincere endeavour'. For there were already by the end of last year disquieting signs. Honourable members may recall that, as I stated to the press afterwards, when I talked with Mr. Khrushchev in New York on 12th October, 1960, he expressed the view that the suspension of nuclear tests was of diminishing importance.

Nevertheless the Western Powers, for their part, continued their unremitting efforts to seek agreement.

Resumption of Conference, March 1961:

President Kennedy, on assuming office, ordered an intensive review of the issues involved, and when the Conference resumed on 21st March, 1961, a new set of proposals was submitted by the United States and the United Kingdom. These proposals, which incorporate important concessions to Russian positions, were:--

1. To reduce the number of on-site inspections in each of the nuclear countries from a fixed figure of twenty to a possible twelve, depending on the number of suspicious seismic events;
2. To reduce the number of control posts on Soviet territory from twenty-one to nineteen;
3. To extend from twenty-seven months to three years the proposed moratorium on smaller underground tests and the associated research programme;
4. To institute a ban on all nuclear weapons tests at high altitudes and in outer space;
5. To ask Congress for legislative authority to permit Soviet inspection of the internal mechanism of the nuclear devices used in the seismic research and peaceful uses programmes;
6. To accept the Soviet request for veto over the annual budget of the control organization;
7. To accept the Soviet demand for a parity of seats between Western and Soviet bloc States on the top Control Commission - an arrangement which would give the Soviet Union a voice in guiding the control system equal to that of the United States and the United Kingdom combined, and which would be unprecedented in an international organization.

Then on 18th April, building on the agreements already reached and incorporating these new proposals, the United States and the United Kingdom tabled a complete draft treaty for the suspension of nuclear weapons tests.

Soviet Reversal:

The Soviet reaction was ominous and disheartening. Not only did the Soviet Delegate, Mr. Tsarapkin, return to the conference table without constructive proposals, making it clear that the Soviet Union had not used the three months' adjournment to seek ways of resolving points of difference, but he even went back on an agreement which the Soviet Union had made over a year previously. He insisted that, instead of having, as had been agreed, a single neutral administrator as chief executive officer of the control organization, there should be established a triumvirate of administrators, one from the Soviet group, one from the Western powers and one from the 'neutralists', who would be required to reach their decisions unanimously. Each member would therefore have a veto. This is the so-called 'Troika' principle which the Soviet Union put forward at the last General Assembly of the United Nations to replace the office of Secretary-General. It would give the Soviet Union the power to prevent any inspection by the control organization of suspected breaches of the treaty by the Soviet Union.

Kennedy-Khrushchev Meeting in Vienna:

This uncompromising, retrograde attitude was continued by Mr. Khrushchev when he met President Kennedy in Vienna. The Russian 'Aide-memoire' or memorandum of 4th June reiterates this new Soviet contention that "there do not and cannot exist neutral men". I call it "new" advisedly, because in January of last year, Mr. Tsarapkin, the Soviet negotiator said at the Conference: "Out of the three thousand million human beings on earth we shall always be able to find someone on whom you and we can agree". And the following month he said: "In neutral countries it will always be possible to find a person, a really neutral person, who can be used for the job of carrying out the duties of administrator". And in June, 1960, he said: "It will always be possible to discover in the world a person acceptable to both sides for nomination for the post as administrator".

The Vienna Memorandum also proposed that the negotiations on the suspension of nuclear tests should be merged with discussion of general complete disarmament. That is to say, the Russians proposed that the measure of agreement which had been so painfully won through nearly three years of patient negotiation should be tossed back into the melting pot. They proposed that agreement on the suspension of nuclear weapons tests, which is, despite its complexities, a relatively simple operation, should be made dependent upon achieving agreement on the much vaster and the infinitely more complicated question of general and complete disarmament. This Memorandum also disclosed the hollowness of the much vaunted offer to accept unconditionally any proposals of the Western Powers on control if they would accept the Russian proposal on general and complete disarmament. This Memorandum makes it plain that the Russians will accept control and inspection only after disarmament has been completed because "as long as states maintain their Armed Forces, no control can be free from intelligence. When Armed Forces are abolished and armaments destroyed, then only control will not be connected with intelligence".

The Memorandum further suggests that the policing of a disarmed world would be through national contingents - (in other words there would be no standing international force) which

"could be used through the Security Council" - (that is to say they would be subject to the Russian veto). In addition, "all the main groups of States should, of course, be equally represented on the command of such international forces" - (that is to say they would be under a 'troika' command which would give the Soviet Union the power of veto over the day-to-day operations of the forces).

United States Reply:

The United States replied to this Memorandum in a Note of 17th June. This Note patiently rehearsed the substantial concessions which the West had offered since the talks resumed, pointed out the objections to the Russian proposals, and drew attention to the wider consequences for which the Soviet Union would be responsible.

The Russian reply was a long Note dated 5th July which made no concessions but maintained the new Russian position uncompromisingly.

The exchange ended with a United States Note of 15th July which returned to the central issue and sought to determine whether the Soviet Union was willing to reach an agreement which would halt nuclear weapons tests under effective international control.

Breakdown of Conference:

The Conference at Geneva continued, despite all discouragement, with the West still trying to meet the Russian objections. On 28th and 30th August the United Kingdom and United States representatives made three new and important concessions:-

- (1) They tried to satisfy the Soviet Union completely about small underground tests. (These at present cannot be reliably detected and a moratorium had been suggested to allow research into improved detection methods.) The new proposals envisaged consultation before the moratorium ended. During the last six months a panel of experts would report on recommended improvements in the control system, the capability of the system in the light of these improvements, and whether or not it would be possible to reduce or eliminate altogether the range of undetectable explosions.
- (2) They tried to satisfy the Russian doubts about the impartiality of the administrator, by making him removable from office by simple majority vote in the Control Commission which would comprise four Russians, four Western representatives, and three neutrals.
- (3) They tried to allay Russian fears that inspection teams would be used for espionage by offering to make half the number of each team nationals of "uncommitted" countries.

The Soviet reply, made on the same day as the last two of these concessions, was to announce its intention to resume testing.

Soviet Resumption of Tests:

On 1st September the Soviet Union exploded a nuclear device. Even this did not exhaust the patience or the hope of the Western leaders. On 3rd September, as I mentioned last

week, President Kennedy and Mr. Macmillan made a joint offer to Mr. Khrushchev that their three governments agree, with immediate effect, not to conduct nuclear tests in the atmosphere such as would produce radio active fall-out. They proposed that their representatives meet at Geneva on 9th September to record this agreement. They further emphasized that this proposal was not in any way conditional upon the establishment of new or additional controls and that they were prepared to rely on existing long-range methods of detection which would not involve entry into or overflight of Russian territory.

The Russian reply, as we all know, was the explosion of a second nuclear device, and a third and then a fourth. The explosion of four atomic devices within a span of six days points to a high degree of planning and advance preparation over a long period. It means that Soviet participation at the Geneva talks has for some time been a sham. It means that while they have allegedly been negotiating for the suspension of nuclear weapons tests they have been preparing an extensive series of tests which, it must be assumed, will add materially to Russian nuclear weapons capability. In this context I would again recall that on 28th August, 1959, the Soviet Government announced its decision "not to resume nuclear explosions" if the Western Powers did not resume. In the face of the Soviet Union's patent indifference to the Western proposals or world opinion, President Kennedy found himself obliged to make the following announcement on 5th September, after the third in the present series of Russian tests:-

"In view of the continued testing by the Soviet Government, I have today ordered the resumption of nuclear tests in the laboratory and underground with no fall-out.

"In our efforts to achieve an end to nuclear testing, we have taken every step that reasonable men could justify.

"In view of the acts of the Soviet Government, we must now take those steps which prudent men find essential. We have no other choice in fulfilment of the responsibilities of the United States Government to its own citizens and to the security of other free nations.

"Our offer to make an agreement to end all fall-out tests remains open until September 9."

Recent Developments:

The Soviet Union has now rejected the joint United Kingdom-United States offer and gone on to conduct ~~three~~ further atmospheric tests of nuclear devices, two with a force of several megatons, that is to say, equivalent in explosive power to several million tons of TNT. Mr. Khrushchev, in rejecting the Western offer, contended that a nuclear tests suspension agreement must be considered in the wider context of general and complete disarmament. This Soviet reaction, as I suggested last Thursday, provided "a complete test of the good faith and pacific intentions of the Communists". They have failed that test. In contradiction to Mr. Khrushchev's repeated statements on the need to protect the world from the dangers of radio-active fall-out, they have brushed aside the offer of an agreement which would have done just this.

The Soviet claim that it is not prepared to conclude partial disarmament or suspension agreements, but wishes to consider all these problems in the context of general and complete disarmament, is a transparent propaganda device. The problem of general and complete disarmament is vast and complex and a solution cannot be achieved by "short-cuts". The West

has always believed that a major step towards general disarmament would be the conclusion of a nuclear tests ban treaty. In fact, some progress had been made towards the establishment of such a treaty. Yet the Soviet Union by its present actions seems prepared to nullify the progress already made. In the light of this Soviet intransigence it was no surprise when the Geneva conference adjourned indefinitely on 9th September.

On 10th September, immediately after adjournment of the conference, the Soviet Union announced that it would begin testing multi-stage rockets to be fired into the Pacific Ocean in an area south-west of Hawaii. The rockets to be tested are said to be more powerful and improved versions of multi-stage carrier rockets already used in space experiments.

Commentary:

The record makes it clear that the Soviet Union has, from the outset, treated the whole issue of nuclear tests bans with complete cynicism, recklessly pursuing what it conceives as its national interest yet at the same time playing on the hopes and fears of the millions of peace-loving people throughout the world. The first Russian "suspension" in March, 1958, followed completion of one series of tests. The next series, in November, 1958, was pressed through with a total disregard of international opinion. In August, 1959, presumably when the immediate requirements of the Russian military machine had been met, a solemn promise was given that the U.S.S.R. would not be the first to conduct any further nuclear tests. The events of these last days show how much faith can be placed in assurances of this kind. It is also clear that while professing to negotiate seriously at Geneva, the Russians were making detailed preparations for the current series of tests. No doubt as soon as the series has been completed there will be yet another Soviet proposal for an unconditional suspension on both sides, with the Communist propaganda machine fully mobilized to denounce the United States if it continues the tests it has now been forced to undertake.

The Australian Government commends the patience and restraint - contrasting sharply with the Soviet approach to this issue - which the Western leaders have shown throughout the long and (as now proved) fruitless negotiations at Geneva. Still more commendable have been their persistent and imaginative efforts to seek out every possibility of agreement and, in recent days, to salvage something from the wreck. Given the total lack of response from the Soviet Union, it is inconceivable that the United States should continue its self-imposed ban on nuclear testing in the present grave situation. My Government wholeheartedly supports President Kennedy's decision to resume underground tests, a decision which the Soviet actions have now made essential to the security of the free nations. For, let us make no mistake, our own security is directly involved. So long as the Soviet Union refuses to conclude an effective agreement for the prohibition and control of nuclear tests, we will be left in the grim position that the only assurance that its leaders will not resort to the ultimate weapon is the knowledge that its use would mean their own annihilation.

At the same time it is noteworthy that even now the United States, at a substantial sacrifice in time, convenience and money, still refrains from carrying out the atmospheric tests which generate fall-out. There is a clear and important difference between the atmospheric tests conducted by the Russians and the underground testing now being undertaken by the United States.

Although the recent Soviet actions have not come as a complete surprise, their suddenness and brutality - and the threat which they pose to world peace - are nonetheless shocking and deeply depressing. It appears that the fifth, sixth and seventh Soviet tests were in the Arctic regions. Only two months ago ten nations met in Canberra in this very Chamber to give effect to the Antarctic Treaty, a modest agreement designed to remove causes of friction and dispute and to facilitate work together for the common good in exploration and development. The Soviet Union was among the signatories to this agreement, under which nuclear explosions are forbidden in the Antarctic. I should still like to hope that in the larger interests of mankind, the Soviet leaders could recover something of the spirit of moderation and co-operation which marked the Antarctic Conference and that the ban on nuclear tests, with proper control and safeguards, will become universal. Until it does, the free nations can place no reliance on Soviet professions of concern for mankind. Nor can they accept as genuine the Soviet claim to be the champion of general and complete disarmament.

GENEVA CONFERENCE ON THE DISCONTINUANCE OF NUCLEAR
WEAPON TESTS - CHRONOLOGY

- 1st July, 1958 - Following exchanges between President Eisenhower of the United States and Marshal Bulganin of the Soviet Union on the possibility of a Nuclear Tests Ban Treaty a Conference of Experts to Study the Possibility of detecting Violations of a Possible Agreement on the suspension of Nuclear Tests opened at Geneva.
- 21st August, 1958 - An agreed report on the technical feasibility of detecting nuclear explosions was adopted by the Conference of Experts.
- 22nd August, 1958 - The United Kingdom and the United States Governments announced that they were prepared to suspend nuclear testing for one year from 31st October, 1958, provided negotiations for a Tests Ban Treaty began on that date and provided the Soviet Union did not resume testing.
- 31st October, 1958 - The Geneva Conference on the Discontinuance of Nuclear Weapon Tests convened.
- 1st November, 1958 - The Soviet Union exploded a Nuclear device.
- 3rd November, 1958 - The Soviet Union exploded a further Nuclear device.
- 13th April, 1959 - President Eisenhower in a letter to Mr. Khrushchev suggested that, in the absence of Soviet agreement to controls that would be effective in all environments, a phased agreement providing for discontinuance in certain environments be negotiated. The President suggested banning all atmospheric tests initially.
- 23rd April, 1959 - Mr. Khrushchev rejected President Eisenhower's proposal and insisted that efforts continue with the sole objective of concluding a treaty that would provide for the cessation of all types of nuclear weapon tests.
- 5th May, 1959 - President Eisenhower in a letter to Mr. Khrushchev reiterated the terms of his letter of 13th April.
- 14th May, 1959 - Mr. Khrushchev in a letter to President Eisenhower although restating the views expressed in his letter of 23rd April, expressed Soviet willingness to enter into experts' meetings on the detection of high altitude tests.
- 10th August, 1959 - Mr. Khrushchev stated that the U.S.S.R. "is ready to accept the most solemn obligation not to be the first to conduct any further tests of nuclear weapons".
- 29th August, 1959 - The Government of the United Kingdom confirmed an earlier statement, made by Mr. R.A. Butler in the House of Commons, that it would not conduct any nuclear weapon tests so long as useful discussions at Geneva continued.

- 29th December, 1959 - President Eisenhower announced that the United States would consider itself free to resume nuclear weapon testing when its voluntary moratorium expired on 31st December, 1959, but that it would not resume testing without announcing its intention in advance.
- 11th February, 1960 - The United States, supported by the United Kingdom, presented to the Conference a proposal for a phased treaty which would immediately end all nuclear weapon tests in those environments where effective control could be established.
- The proposal called for a ban on all tests above ground up to the maximum height to which effective controls could be agreed, all underwater tests, and all underground tests above a seismic magnitude of 4.75 on the Richter seismographic scale. (This magnitude became known as the "threshold").
- 13th February, 1960 - France exploded its first nuclear device in the Sahara Desert.
- 19th March, 1960 - The Soviet Union expressed its willingness to agree to a treaty banning all tests in the atmosphere, underwater and in cosmic space, and all underground tests above seismic magnitude 4.75, contingent on a proviso that all parties to the treaty undertook an obligation not to test below the threshold during the period required to conduct a research programme.
- 29th March, 1960 - The United States and the United Kingdom declared themselves willing to accept a temporary, unilaterally declared, moratorium on tests below the threshold. It was made clear that neither country would institute this moratorium until the remaining treaty issues - e.g. quota for on-site inspections, voting procedures, etc. - were resolved.
- 1st April, 1960 - France exploded its second nuclear device in the Sahara Desert.
- 3rd May, 1960 - The Soviet Union declared that the United Kingdom - United States declaration of 29th March could have a "positive" effect on bringing the positions of the East and West closer together on an agreement to halt nuclear weapon tests.
- 11th May, 1960 - A conference of scientists from the United Kingdom, the United States and the Soviet Union convened to exchange information on the research programmes each power believed should be undertaken to improve capabilities for detecting and identifying underground nuclear explosions.
- 5th December, 1960 - The Geneva Conference on the Discontinuance of Nuclear Weapon Tests adjourned.
- 27th December, 1960 - France exploded its third nuclear device in the Sahara Desert.

- 21st March, 1961 - The Geneva Conference on the Discontinuance of Nuclear Weapon Tests re-opened. The United States presented new proposals covering most of the contentious issues relating to the control system which still remained.
- The Soviet Union demanded, contrary to its earlier position, that the proposed Administrator of any agreed treaty should be replaced by a triumvirate representing Soviet, Western and Uncommitted nations and that all decisions should be unanimous. The Soviet Union for the first time raised the question of French nuclear testing claiming it would have a "negative" effect on the Conference.
- 18th April, 1961 - The United Kingdom and the United States' representatives at the Geneva Conference on the Discontinuance of Nuclear Weapon Tests introduced the text of a complete draft treaty for banning nuclear tests.
- 25th April, 1961 - France exploded its fourth nuclear device in the Sahara Desert.
- 4th June, 1961 - Mr. Khrushchev meeting with Mr. Kennedy in Vienna handed the latter an "Aide-Memore" restating the Soviet points of view on the Western proposals for a Draft Treaty. In this "Aide-Memoire", the Soviet Union propounded the view that it was impossible to find a "neutral man" and that it was thus necessary for any body administering a Nuclear Tests Ban Treaty to be a tripartite body and for any international peace-keeping body to operate through the Security Council with a tripartite commission. These two proposals lay open the way to Soviet veto.
- 17th June, 1961 - The United States Government delivered a Note to the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs in reply to the Soviet "Aide-Memoire" which rebutted the arguments of the Soviet Union, drawing attention to the handicaps of the Soviet "troika" proposal and pointing out that truly neutral officials have frequently held international office before.
- 5th July, 1961 - The Soviet Union forwarded a Note to the Government of the United States which in greater length repeated the arguments already advanced in the Soviet "Aide Memoire" of 4th June.
- 15th July, 1961 - The Government of the United States of America forwarded a further Note to the Soviet Government in reply to the Soviet Note of 15th July, but concentrating on the central issue in dispute; that of whether the Soviet Union really wished to negotiate an effective Nuclear Tests Ban Treaty. The Note pointed out that despite Western concessions on all points which the Soviet Union had stated to be stumbling blocks, the Soviet Union remained intransigent.
- 28th August, 1961 - The Western representatives at the Geneva Conference made concessions designed to satisfy the Soviet Union completely on what would happen towards the end of the moratorium on small underground tests. Provision would be made for a panel of experts to report on improvements in a control system and recommendations made on whether the "Threshold" should be lowered or eliminated.

- 30th August, 1961 - The Western representatives at the Geneva Conference made concessions designed to satisfy the Soviet Union on the remaining matters which the Soviet Union claimed constituted obstacles to the conclusion of a treaty. These further concessions covered the position of the Administrator of a treaty providing for his replacement by a majority vote in the Control Commission if he proved unsatisfactory - and the inclusion in inspection teams operating in the territory of the original parties of the treaty of 50% of members from uncommitted countries.
- 30th August, 1961 - The Soviet Union announced that it was resuming the testing of nuclear weapons.
- 1st September, 1961 - The Soviet Union exploded a nuclear device in the atmosphere in Soviet Central Asia. The device was in the "intermediate" range (approximately 20 kilotons).
- 3rd September, 1961 - The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and the President of the United States proposed to Mr. Khrushchev that the United Kingdom, the United States and the U.S.S.R. agree immediately not to conduct nuclear tests in the atmosphere which would produce fallout. This offer was to remain open until 9th September.
- 4th September, 1961 - The Soviet Union exploded a nuclear device in the atmosphere of "intermediate" range in Soviet Central Asia. This was the second device exploded following the Soviet announcement that it was resuming testing.
- 5th September, 1961 - The Soviet Union exploded a nuclear device of "intermediate" range in the atmosphere in Soviet Central Asia. This was the third device exploded by the Soviet Union following the announcement it was resuming testing.
- 5th September, 1961 - President Kennedy issued a statement that "in view of the continued testing by the Soviet Government, I have today ordered the resumption of nuclear tests in laboratory and underground with no fall-out". President Kennedy further stated that the offer he had made jointly with Mr. Macmillan still remained open until 9th September. A White House spokesman said that testing would resume some time in September.
- 6th September, 1961 - The Soviet Union exploded its fourth nuclear device in the atmosphere since announcing the resumption of tests. This explosion was somewhere east of Stalingrad.
- 10th September, 1961 - The Soviet Union exploded two nuclear devices in the atmosphere near the Arctic island of Novaya Zemlya. The first device exploded was the largest of the present Soviet series with a force of several megatons - one megaton equals the force of one million tons of T.N.T.
- The second device exploded was in the "intermediate" range.

Page 5.

12th September, 1961 - The Soviet Union exploded its seventh nuclear device of several megatons force in the atmosphere in the Arctic.
