

Letter From President Kennedy to Chairman Khrushchev

Washington, March 7, 1962.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: On February twenty-second [21] last I wrote you that I was instructing appropriate officers of this Government to prepare concrete proposals for immediate projects of common action in the exploration of space. I now present such proposals to you.

The exploration of space is a broad and varied activity and the possibilities for cooperation are many. In suggesting the possible first steps which are set out below, I do not intend to limit our mutual consideration of desirable cooperative activities. On the contrary, I will welcome your concrete suggestions along these or other lines.

1. Perhaps we could render no greater service to mankind through our space programs than by the joint establishment of an early operational weather satellite system. Such a system would be designed to provide global weather data for prompt use by any nation. To initiate this service, I propose that the United States and the Soviet Union each launch a satellite to photograph cloud cover and provide other agreed meteorological services for all nations. The two satellites would be placed in near-polar orbits in planes approximately perpendicular to each other, thus providing regular coverage of all areas. This immensely valuable data would then be disseminated through normal international meteorological channels and would make a significant contribution to the research and service programs now under study by the World Meteorological Organization in response to Resolution 1721 (XVI) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 20, 1961.

2. It would be of great interest to those responsible for the conduct of our respective space programs if they could obtain operational tracking services from each other's territories. Accordingly, I propose that each of our countries establish and operate a radio tracking station to provide tracking services to the other, utilizing equipment which we would each provide to the other. Thus, the United States would provide the technical equipment for a tracking station to be established in the Soviet Union and to be operated by Soviet technicians. The United States would in turn establish and operate a radio tracking station utilizing Soviet equipment. Each country would train the other's technicians in the operation of its equipment, would utilize the station located on its territory to provide tracking services to the other, and would afford such access as may be necessary to accommodate modifications and maintenance of equipment from time to time.

3. In the field of the earth sciences, the precise character of the earth's magnetic field is central to many scientific problems. I propose therefore that we cooperate in mapping the earth's magnetic field in space by utilizing two satellites, one in a near-earth orbit and the second in a more distant orbit. The United States would launch one of these satellites, while the Soviet Union would launch the other. The data would be exchanged throughout the world scientific community, and opportunities for correlation of supporting data obtained on the ground would be arranged.

4. In the field of experimental communications by satellite, the United States has already undertaken arrangements to test and demonstrate the feasibility of intercontinental transmissions. A number of countries are constructing equipment suitable for participation in such testing. I would welcome the Soviet Union's joining in this cooperative effort which will be a step toward meeting the objective, contained in United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1721 (XVI), that communications by means of satellites should be available to the nations of the world as soon as practicable on a global and non-discriminatory basis. I note also that Secretary Rusk has broached the subject of cooperation in

this field with Minister Gromyko and that Mr. Gromyko has expressed some interest. Our technical representatives might now discuss specific possibilities in this field.

5. Given our common interest in manned space flights and in insuring man's ability to survive in space and return safely, I propose that we pool our efforts and exchange our knowledge in the field of space medicine, where future research can be pursued in cooperation with scientists from various countries.

Beyond these specific projects we are prepared now to discuss broader cooperation in the still more challenging projects which must be undertaken in the exploration of outer space. The tasks are so challenging, the costs so great, and the risks to the brave men who engage in space exploration so grave, that we must in all good conscience try every possibility of sharing these tasks and costs and of minimizing these risks. Leaders of the United States space program have developed detailed plans for an orderly sequence of manned and unmanned flights for exploration of space and the planets. Out of discussion of these plans, and of your own, for undertaking the tasks of this decade would undoubtedly emerge possibilities for substantive scientific and technical cooperation in manned and unmanned space investigations. Some possibilities are not yet precisely identifiable, but should become clear as the space programs of our two countries proceed. In the case of others it may be possible to start planning together now. For example, we might cooperate in unmanned exploration of the lunar surface, or we might commence now the mutual definition of steps to be taken in sequence for an exhaustive scientific investigation of the planets Mars or Venus, including consideration of the possible utility of manned flight in such programs. When a proper sequence for experiments has been determined, we might share responsibility for the necessary projects. All data would be made freely available.

I believe it is both appropriate and desirable that we take full cognizance of the scientific and other contributions which other states the world over might be able to make in such programs. As agreements are reached between us on any parts of these or similar programs, I propose that we report them to the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. The Committee offers a variety of additional opportunities for joint cooperative efforts within the framework of its mandate as set forth in General Assembly Resolutions 1472 (XIV) and 1721 (XVI).

I am designating technical representatives who will be prepared to meet and discuss with your representatives our ideas and yours in a spirit of practical cooperation. In order to accomplish this at an early date, I suggest that the representatives of our two countries who will be coming to New York to take part in the United Nations Outer Space Committee meet privately to discuss the proposals set forth in this letter.

Sincerely,