

to prepare a comprehensive set of proposals which unfortunately the Soviet Union rejected in the United Nations.

Against this background, the tentative suggestion for a summit meeting put forward by the Russians in December and expanded in mid-January was and continues to be under consideration. The Prime Minister, in his reply to Mr. Bulganin's letter, emphasized that the value of such a meeting would depend on the expectation of beneficial results, and that accordingly it should be carefully prepared. He told Mr. Bulganin, and I quote -

"I am sure that you will agree that a meeting of this kind which did not lead to positive agreement on at least some of the basic issues with which we are confronted might result in a public reaction more likely to heighten than lessen world tension. In order not to disappoint public opinion in our respective countries, we must, therefore, I submit, make sure that such a meeting be prepared in advance with the utmost care".

Following consultation, the NATO governments placed great emphasis on this need for careful preparations in order to provide a framework for fruitful discussions at the summit. The Soviet Union, however, repeatedly insisted that preliminary talks to determine the nature and scope of the meeting were unnecessary and that such matters could be dealt with at the meeting itself. This Soviet unwillingness to agree to adequate preparation - the pick and shovel work of diplomacy - made it difficult to determine exactly what the U.S.S.R. had in mind. Moreover, the successive waves of letters emanating from Moscow and proposing agenda items in the form of preconceived Soviet solutions did not create the proper kind of climate in which conference preliminaries could be worked out.

In these circumstances, what seemed to be required was a new initiative from NATO that would be both flexible and forthcoming. It was desirable to try to remove the question of a summit meeting from the arena of world propaganda. We in the West considered it necessary to ascertain whether the U.S.S.R. is genuinely prepared to participate in a meeting designed to achieve some definite results. We decided that this would best be achieved by narrowing down through private diplomatic discussions with the Russians the arena in which we might reasonably expect to make headway in eliminating East-West differences.

This important problem was discussed in NATO late last month. On March 31, it was agreed that the United States, United Kingdom and French Ambassadors in Moscow should deliver a Western statement on the summit meeting to the Soviet Union. In this statement, the members of the Alliance referred to the necessity of making "a serious attempt to reach agreement on the main problems affecting the attainment of peace and stability in the world" and pointed to the desirability of a summit meeting