

THE VISIT TO THE SOVIET UNION

Text of the talk by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. L. B. Pearson, for the "Special Speakers Series" of the CBC on November 27, 1955.

Since returning from my visit to the Soviet Union, I have often been asked: Why did you go there? And what were the results, if any?

I went to Russia primarily to exchange views about current international issues, particularly those of direct concern to our two countries, in the hope that such an exchange might assist in some small way in the resolution of differences; or at least give me a clearer understanding of what these differences were. Certainly no one can be happy about them when you realize that the price of failure to establish a durable peace might easily be the unimaginable devastation of a nuclear war.

In my talks with the Soviet leaders I did what I could, and whenever I had the chance, to correct misunderstandings or misapprehensions about the policies by which we in Canada, in concert with our Allies, seek to protect our security and ensure peace.

I tried to make them realize—and I did not have the impression that this was labouring the obvious—that we of the West are as vitally concerned as the Soviet leaders told me they were, with peace and security and the removal of the causes of war. But I likewise made it clear to them that we were not prepared to scrap our collective security arrangements or weaken our defences merely because of what has been called the "Geneva Spirit";—especially when as the recent Geneva conference has shown, that "Spirit" as a subject for toasts is one thing; but as a basis for negotiations is something else. It is not enough to talk in general and friendly terms about "Reducing International Tension", while leaving unresolved the basic difference which causes these tensions.

No Secret

During my visit to Moscow and to the Crimea we talked of many things—of Ski's and shoes and sealing wax, and cabbages"—and NATO. Mr. Khrushchov, a very blunt and outspoken person, who does not waste time on the niceties of language or protocol, and the more subtle and sophisticated Mr. Bulganin (these two seem very close together at the "summit", of Soviet affairs) made no secret to me of their determination to weaken and destroy our North Atlantic Organization as an aggressive, anti-Soviet Bloc.

I told them that NATO was no such thing; that it was formed only after the United Na-

tions had proved ineffective to guarantee our security against the dangers that threatened us; that strong support for it would remain a principle of Canadian foreign and defence policy until the international situation or the United Nations made regional security pacts unnecessary.

I also did my best to convince them that the United States had no intention of attacking the U.S.S.R. or trying to use NATO for that purpose. I pointed out that if the United States were the aggressive military, imperialist state they claimed it to be, there would be no Canada today, except as an American satellite, and that, as they should know, we were not.

The Soviet leaders also talked a lot about Germany. They stated bluntly that they would not permit that country to be unified unless she withdrew from NATO.

We should not force Germany to remain in NATO, said Khrushchov. I replied that all we asked was the right of a Germany united by free elections to decide what her future course would be.

Frank Discussion

But there would be no such elections—or no such unification—Khrushchov warned me—until a European security system of the kind proposed by his government had replaced NATO.

Well, that was the kind of frank discussion we had, and I think it was useful—and revealing.

Such a forthright talk, however, did not affect in any way the friendly welcome we received. Our hosts could not have done more for our comfort and entertainment. The warm and generous hospitality for which the Russian people have been noted—and long before the Communist revolution—seemed, and I think was, genuine. It was difficult to doubt the sincerity of the rank and file when they protested their passion for peace. But the people of all nations want peace. Their desire in this regard is only politically important when they can bring it to bear effectively on the policy of their Governments.

For Canada, specifically, those with whom I talked expressed high regard; respected our achievements in war and peace. They are not unaware, I may say, of our strategic location as their neighbours across the Pole. Mr.