

CANADA'S FOREIGN POLICY

In his review of Canada's external relations in the House of Commons on February 26, 1959, Mr. Sidney E. Smith, Secretary of State for External Affairs, said that he would not engage in a global survey, but that he would attempt to explain the Government's attitude on a number of specific issues.

Mr. Smith made the following statement on the Berlin situation:

"...The most important and urgent of the problems facing Canada and her NATO allies lies in the field of East-West relations. I approach this subject gravely but not despondently. When I presented my estimates, in July of last year, I believe, I spoke of the need to maintain our defences and at the same time to endeavour to make some advance in establishing mutual trust and confidence and in coming to some understanding with the Soviet Union. The communist leaders, as we all know, have professed their desire to promote the objectives of easing tension and of a reduction of the cold war. These professions, however, are certainly difficult to reconcile with the demands made by the Soviet Government on November 27, 1958 when it abruptly declared that existing agreements on Berlin were null and void.

"Whatever the basic Russian objectives may have been, I am bound to observe that these tactics do not convey an image of a state bent on a lessening of international tension. On the contrary, the Soviet Union deliberately chose to create a crisis where none had recently existed, and thereby to plunge the whole world into a new period of deep anxiety that will not abate until there is some sort of meeting of minds in negotiation between East and West and some agreement has been reached on the German question.

"The Berlin situation was the critical issue before the NATO Council meeting held in Paris last December. I, along with my colleagues the Ministers of Finance, Defence and Defence Production, had the honour to represent Canada at that meeting. Members will recall that before the formal meeting of the NATO Council began on December 16, there was a meeting on Sunday, December 14, at which were present representatives of the three occupying powers from the West--the United Kingdom, the United States and France. At that meeting, held, as I said a moment ago, prior to the meeting of the Council, there were also present representatives of West Germany. Willie Brandt, who honoured this country by a visit recently, also attended that meeting in his capacity as Mayor of West Berlin. Out of that meeting of the three occupying powers and West Germany came a statement in which they publicly rejected the Soviet proposals and reaffirmed their determination to maintain their position and rights in the city, including the right of free access to Berlin.

"When this issue came before the NATO Council the Canadian Delegation took an active part--I say without immodesty that we did take an active part--in pressing for a full discussion of the Berlin situation in the Council with emphasis on maintaining an appropriate blend of firmness in the face of threats, and constant readiness to examine serious Soviet proposals. The position adopted by the Council two days later was entirely consonant with the Canadian position. The Council, in associating itself with the position taken by the four Western powers, adopted the view that the Berlin question could be satisfactorily settled only in the context of a consideration of the problem of Germany as a whole. The Council referred to the notes that had been sent by the Western powers to the U.S.S.R., in which they offered to negotiate on the situation with respect to Germany as a whole. That offer was reaffirmed in the communiqué issued at the termination of the NATO Council meeting. Then, coupled with the consideration of the problem of Germany as a whole, they indicated their urgent willingness and desire to have discussions on the related issues of European security and disarmament.

"In addition to supporting the position taken by the Western occupying powers, members of the Council--and I refer you to the communiqué I have mentioned--reiterated the stand of the occupying powers that NATO is a defensive organization. They also said, Mr. Speaker, that in respect of Berlin they desired to leave no doubt as to the determination of the alliance to stand fast and to employ its defensive capacity in the event of aggression against Berlin or any interference with the arrangements that had been duly entered into between the occupying powers and the U.S.S.R. in a series of meetings culminating in 1949.

"In giving this undertaking in respect of Berlin, neither the Council nor its individual members was assuming obligations that were new. Indeed, the NATO partners have been bound in respect of the defence of Berlin since October 22, 1954. This obligation was undertaken by the NATO Council on the occasion of West Germany joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, when all the other members of the alliance formally associated themselves with the provisions declared earlier, in the month of October 1954, that the three occupying powers would remain in Berlin so long as their responsibilities so required. The text of the obligation assumed by Canada, as a member of NATO, is, and I quote:

'to treat any attack against Berlin from any quarter as an attack upon their forces and themselves'.

"Members of the House, Mr. Speaker, may recall that on December 31--that was after the