

PROSPECTS FOR SUMMIT MEETING

An indication of Canadian thinking on the question of a summit meeting was given April 20, 1958, by Mr. Sidney E. Smith, Secretary of State for External Affairs, in a broadcast over the CBC radio network.

Mr. Smith said, in part:

"Canada's general approach to the concept of a summit conference has been developed in concert with our NATO allies. At the conclusion of the meeting of heads of government held in Paris last December, it was stated that 'We are always ready to settle international problems by negotiation taking into account the legitimate interests of all...and we seek an end to world tension'. In particular, we again stressed our willingness 'to examine any proposal, from whatever source, for general or partial disarmament'. This is perhaps the key question in any negotiations with the Soviet Union. Canadian representatives shared in many months of negotiations on this issue with the Russians and helped 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 'if it would provide opportunity for conducting serious discussions on major problems and would be an effective means of reaching agreement on significant subjects'. At the same time, the statement called for preparatory work on the summit meeting to begin through diplomatic exchanges in Moscow in the second half of April leading to a meeting between foreign ministers. The main purpose of this preparatory work should, it was pointed out, be to examine the major questions at issue and so draw up a suitable agenda.

"The Russian reply of April 11 was disappointing in that it still insisted that preparations should be confined largely to procedural arrangements and contended that a summit meeting should be held whether or not preparatory work gave promise of success. Nevertheless, in a spirit of accommodation, the Western powers, with the approval of NATO, decided that the qualified Soviet acceptance of diplomatic discussions should be followed up. They have told the Russians that differences on preparation should be the first subject of the diplomatic talks, and that opposing positions on major issues must be examined to determine whether possibilities of agreement exist. The results of this examination must be satisfactory before a worthwhile summit meeting can be held. The present talks in Moscow should demonstrate whether the Soviet Union wants an effective conference or is chiefly interested in propaganda gains. And I may add in this regard that the recent Soviet accusations against the United States are hardly encouraging.

"In the event that agreement can subsequently be reached on satisfactory preparatory work, the selection of the agenda will still