

Role of Smaller Powers

... It might be objected that it is unrealistic to envisage any significant progress in East-West problems except in terms of the relations between the greatest powers - the Soviet Union, the United States, Communist China. Those making this objection might argue that, for the others, East-West relations mean only limited bilateral matters.

As the Foreign Minister of what is frequently called a "middle power", I do not want to exaggerate the role of lesser powers. Neither do I want it to be misrepresented from what I know in fact it can be.

Canada has a number of important interests which go beyond what one could call "bilateral" matters. I need scarcely remind you, for example, that with our geographic location and our vast Arctic territories we have a keen interest in all questions relating to the nuclear balance of power, to the regional defence arrangements, to disarmament and to arms control proposals.

We have been involved in the development of nuclear energy for some time and could have become a military nuclear power soon after the end of the last war if we had envisaged Canada's role in these terms. We have assisted several nations in developing the peaceful use of nuclear power, under the recognized safeguards.

Canada has been involved in disarmament discussions for some years and is a member of the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Commission. In the Commission, along with all the other members, we have given particular attention to the ways of preventing further proliferation of nuclear weapons.

We have welcomed, therefore, the recent indications arising from United States-Soviet contacts that progress is being made towards agreement on non-proliferation measures. We consider that in the coming weeks the most promising line of approach to the problem may well be through direct and private negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union....

... Specific Canadian interests in a number of fields of major international concern lead us, as similar interests lead other middle or lesser powers, to pursue any possibilities of discussion or action which could help in the solution of the major problems....

... The individual positions of Western countries in relations with Communist countries are never quite the same - whether one considers past history, specific national interests, matters of bilateral agreement or public opinion. Similarly, the Soviet Union and other Communist nations, in Europe at any rate, have to an increasing extent differentiated in their relations with Western powers. The differentiation may be based on some miscalculations about supposed fundamental differences between Western powers but, so far as it refers to tangible questions of normal relations between states, it may offer avenues for progress towards a more rational and peaceful world.