



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 58/4

CANADA IN THE WORLD

Address by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. Sidney E. Smith, to the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, Hamilton, Ontario, February 4, 1958.

I intend to look back tonight on the five crowded months since I entered the Government as Secretary of State for External Affairs. I hope that you may find it of some interest if I give to you a few impressions of my portfolio and a few thoughts on some of its problems.

I am well aware that there is no field of human endeavour which has such an attraction for grandstand quarterbacks as this field of foreign affairs. I know, because I was one myself not long ago, and I am sure that many, if not all, of you are. Far from complaining about this, I hope that you are! Your views help to fashion our foreign policy. We need your interest; we need your views.

Indeed, since I moved from Toronto to Ottawa, I have been deeply impressed by the intensity of this public interest. I had of course been aware that international affairs have become increasingly a subject of popular attention and concern. And I had also of course been conscious of Parliament's growing pre-occupation with our external relations. But I was not prepared for -- indeed I was surprised and sobered by -- the size of a Foreign Minister's mailbag, by the variety of its contents, and above all, by the depth of concern for the state of the world which is revealed so clearly, often poignantly, in this correspondence.

That then is my first impression -- of the continuing surge of public interest in our external affairs. I reiterate my hope that this interest will never abate, for it promotes the survival, indeed the flowering, of what I conceive to be a fundamental element in the formulation and conduct of policy -- that the Government should know what is in the public mind, and that the public mind should understand what the Government is seeking to do.

This interchange, this two-way traffic, is vitally important in foreign affairs. There is no field in which a greater need exists for Government policy and public opinion to be in harmony. There is a demand for a united front on foreign policy.

The second impression that I have, as I reflect on these past few months, is of the variety and multiplicity of problems with which a modern foreign office must deal. In a few minutes, I propose to discuss some of the more important and the more serious of these problems. But before doing so, I desire to make one point about the way in which our international business is conducted, and the many forms which it takes.

The nerve centre of the Canadian diplomatic service is the Department of External Affairs in Ottawa. It controls the activity of a network of offices all over the world which represent and protect Canadian interest abroad, provide the Canadian Government with what is perhaps best described as political intelligence on conditions and trends in other countries, and conduct negotiations with other governments on specific problems. We now have sixty-three of these establishments, including Embassies, Legations, Consular offices, and permanent missions accredited to the United Nations and to NATO.

The men and women who are on the staff of these offices abroad are accustomed to variety. They may be sitting with Indian and Polish colleagues on an International Commission responsible for supervising the peace in Indochina. They may be negotiating an agreement with the Government of India or Pakistan or Ceylon or Burma, under the aid programme known as the Colombo Plan. They may be supplying the Government with news and interpretation of events in the Middle East, or attempting an assessment of Mr. Khrushchev's latest cocktail comment. They may be speaking as Canada's representatives in the Council of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or in any of the scores of committees and agencies of the United Nations. Or they may be engaged in seeking new markets for Canadian goods in Africa or Asia or Latin America. And closer to home they may be serving as Canada's salesmen or advocates in what is one of our most challenging diplomatic tasks -- the field of our relations with the United States. I may say that there is in the United States today a growing current of awareness of Canada and its problems, and an increasing recognition of the direct impact on Canada of many American policies and actions. We are heartened by these signs -- there are many of them, but I have in mind particularly the recently announced intention of the United States Senate to conduct an enquiry into Canadian-United States relations.

I have made passing mention of only a few of the tasks which we require our foreign service to do. I make no apology for calling them to your attention, because these officials, and the tasks which they perform, are of vital importance to the welfare of our country. But, particularly, I wish to emphasize that we have,

in our own foreign service and in those of other countries, an instrument which is always available to governments when they have problems to iron out in their relationships. I often think that we would be better off if we relied more on private soundings and discreet probing, in preference to conducting our diplomatic business by press conference or by exchanges of letters in a blaze of publicity.

Against the background of these general observations, I now intend to refer to certain grave problems of the moment in foreign affairs. Six weeks ago I had the privilege of attending the meeting of NATO heads of government in Paris. It was -- and this is generally admitted -- a testing moment for NATO, coming as it did so soon after the world had witnessed striking demonstrations of the advances of Soviet science and technology. It was a time when, on the military side, it seemed clearly necessary to consolidate and improve our defence against possible aggression, and when on the other hand, in terms of political psychology, the moment seemed to have arrived -- at least in the opinion of many -- for a somewhat more flexible approach to the problem of how to negotiate with the Soviet world.

These parallel aims were not easy to reconcile. The concept of the defensive deterrent is not readily harmonized with the idea of probing for peaceful settlements. Some voices of gloom were raised before the conference met. How could NATO overcome the inferiority complex it was supposed to have inherited from Sputnik I and II? Could the posture of holding up one's guard in defence be combined simultaneously with holding out one's hand in a gesture of negotiation?

I believe it is a measure of the success of that conference that unanimous agreement was reached on a communiqué and a declaration which reflect both our determination to preserve our security and our readiness at the same time to talk the Russians on disarmament. In other words the NATO Governments mixed firmness with flexibility, which I submit is the only combination that makes sense at this time.

There has been much discussion in the Western world in recent weeks about the attitude that we should adopt towards negotiations with the Soviet Union. I desire to say a few words about this. In the first place, let me make it clear beyond a doubt that we, as a democratic and loyal member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, are as staunchly determined as anyone in the world to resist the Soviet challenge to our free institutions and way of life. Our stand on this is clear. We are conscious of the threat which faces us and, as our defence programme shows, we are prepared to make, and to keep making, a very substantial national sacrifice as defence insurance. It is only in a free country like Canada that we can make that kind of sacrifice. When I say this I am thinking of men and women in the Baltic States and in Eastern Europe, countries such as Eastern Germany, Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, which live under a

pall of uneasiness, frustrated hope, and fear. For these countries there is no question of defence against the Soviet threat; there is only hope that one day justice will be done.

Let me quote the passage which the Prime Minister, the Right Honourable John Diefenbaker, was instrumental in having inserted in the final declaration of the NATO conference. That passage, which I may add was unanimously accepted, reads as follows:

"For the entire world it is both a tragedy and a great danger that the peoples under international communist rule -- their national independence, human liberties and standard of living as well as their scientific and technological achievements -- have been sacrificed to the purposes of world domination and military power. The suppression of their liberty will not last forever. Already in these countries there is evidence of the growing desire for intellectual and economic freedom. If the free nations are steadfast, the totalitarian menace that now confronts them will eventually recede."

Now I quote once again, this time from the Prime Minister's letter of January 18, 1958, to Premier Bulganin:

"The Canadian Government continues to be concerned about the domination exercised by the U.S.S.R. over Eastern European countries and the Soviet Zone of Germany. You speak of co-existence, but if this concept means recognition of the existence side of capitalist and communist countries, it must also imply non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries including those of Eastern Europe. The events in Hungary of 1956 have not faded from our minds."

These passages show how we feel about the oppressive control which the Soviet Government exercises over its satellites. But indignation and concern, however spontaneous and sincere, are not enough. Our task in 1958 is to evaluate the nature of the Soviet challenge, to assess it as it applies to different regions of the world, to note its changing forms, and to devise new and imaginative means of dealing with it.

It is this many-sided task on which we of the Western world are now engaged. For us, if you will, it is a time for closed ranks and open minds. To refer again to the agreed conclusion of the NATO conference, the members of NATO stated that they would be "prepared to examine any proposal from whatever source, for general or partial disarmament."

One such proposal has been put forward by Poland with support from the Soviet Union. It suggests a nuclear-free zone in Central Europe. In our Prime Minister's recent letter to Mr. Bulganin, he stated that the Canadian Government was studying Mr. Bulganin's comments on the Polish plan, and that Canada intended to join with its allies in looking into the implications of this type of proposal. The Prime Minister also made it clear that one factor of importance in considering such proposals would be the readiness of the participants to undertake an adequate system of inspection and control. This is only common sense. We must always be certain that such undertakings are being faithfully fulfilled.

The question of possible regional disarmament is now receiving careful study in the NATO Council. The Polish plan cannot, of course, be accepted as it stands, but it has given us something to work on. The care with which NATO countries are examining the Polish plan is as eloquent an illustration as anyone could want that NATO is more than a political vehicle devised to serve merely a military and defensive purpose.

Our attitude towards the discussion of this question is an attitude of constructive purpose. A proposal has been made and, whatever the source, we think it should be studied. Moreover we hope that out of our study will come ideas and policies which will require and which will receive equally careful examination by the other side. It is only by such cautious and thoughtful exchanges of views that progress can be made. This is just one example of the kind of preparatory work, the probing and sounding, through diplomatic channels, of which I was speaking earlier.

We hear and read a great deal these days about the advantages or disadvantages of a summit conference. I know from the many letters which I have myself received that high hopes are entertained for such a meeting.

I think that there is a prospect that some kind of a meeting at the summit is going to take place in 1958. The question therefore would be not whether, but when and where and how it should take place. The Prime Minister has made it clear, in his letter to Mr. Bulganin, that if the participating governments (and we still do not know which these will be) desire to meet in Canada, they will be welcome to do so.

But more important than when and where such a conference will be held and who will attend, is the question of how the preparations are made. The essential consideration is that the success of such a meeting must be assured in advance. A meeting that affords only sounding boards for propaganda will not only be useless but also dangerous to the degree that it deepens tensions and widens fears. In preparing the agenda, for instance, it might be wise to restrict it to questions on which there seems to be

some hope of progress. This preparatory work, in my opinion, can best be done by patient and painstaking negotiations carried on with the minimum of publicity through ordinary diplomatic channels. It is a time for the pick and shovel work of diplomacy, and this is always best done behind the scenes.

In these treacherous times we are, as I have already said, bound to maintain our defences. But to regard this as an end in itself would be futile and possibly fatal. We shall never find peace and security by merely continuing the ever more expensive and perilous contest of arms. The mounting costs of nuclear armament could put the wealthiest nations into bankruptcy, and thus provide a bed for the seeds of communism. No fair-minded person could say that we are guilty of such a hopeless and sterile strategy. Honestly and steadfastly we have worked for peace through a workable system of disarmament in which the security of all the participants is not jeopardized. In spite of the discouragement that we have suffered from the Soviet decision to boycott the new Disarmament Commission of twenty-five nations established last autumn by the United Nations, we have no intention of giving up that endeavour. We shall knock on every door that could conceivably lead the world safely away from international tension and stalemate. The stake is the very survival of our civilization - indeed it could be the survival of mankind.

We are earnestly seeking discussions with other nations to find ways and means of resuming serious and constructive negotiations on disarmament between East and West. We seek to set an example to others in this endeavour by not allowing our efforts to be hampered by narrowness, stubbornness, or consideration of mere national prestige. In Mr. Diefenbaker's letter to Premier Bulganin, our Prime Minister reiterated an offer which he had made on behalf of the Canadian Government last summer - that in the context of a disarmament agreement we would be willing to open all or part of Canada to aerial and ground inspection on a basis of reciprocity. The Western disarmament proposals of last August included a reference to the possibility of a system of inspection in the Arctic regions which lie between us and our Russian neighbours to the North.

In this field of disarmament, it would be wrong and dangerous to pretend that there are not enormous difficulties in the way. On the other hand, there are grounds for hope that mutual interest in survival can provide a basis for an agreement with the Russians which does not depend on faith alone but on the self-interest of both sides to maintain it. This is the role of a young, vigorous and peace-loving country like our own - to sound a note of confidence and hope in times which breed pessimism and fear, ill-will and enmity in the international sphere.