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The Honourable Mitchell Sharp,  
Secretary of State for External Affairs,  
Interviewed by Charles Wasserman  
for CBC Weekend,  
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(The following is a transcript of the complete interview, some portions of which were omitted on air to fit the time available.)

Q. Mr. Sharp, on Thursday we had a message from the President of the United States concerning the state of the world. One thing I noticed in it was a remark that the President felt the need to reconcile within the Western alliance the tendency towards autonomy and towards unity. Where does Canada stand on this? Does it tend more towards autonomy within the alliance or unity?

A. It's very difficult to answer this very precisely. In our relations with the United States, for example, we opt for autonomy in general. And we also believe that it is important that there should not be confrontation between blocs, that the West should not deal as a bloc with the East, that there should be enough diversification and autonomy amongst the members of the alliances that we can deal with individual countries on the other side of the Iron Curtain. So we place a good deal of importance on autonomy. On the other hand, we recognize that if we are going to pursue successfully a policy of détente, that we have to act together. For example, in relation to Germany. The German Ostpolitik is very much in our interest as Canadians, I believe, and therefore we want to support the Germans, and therefore we must act together with them and certainly not contrary to their desires at the moment.

Q. Do you think the Ostpolitik of Chancellor Brandt is going in the right direction as it's going now?

A. Yes. I was at the NATO meeting after Willy Brandt became the Chancellor, and there was a tremendous change. Up until that time one had the impression that we were going to follow a policy of confrontation. When Willy Brandt became Chancellor and he began to talk about having discussions with the Russians and the Poles and even with the German Democratic Republic, one began to see the breaking of the old patterns and some hope that the present impasse in Europe would not continue indefinitely. So, we in Canada who had been advocating a policy of détente for some time, found ourselves supported very strongly and in a position in turn to support the Germans.

Q. In studying the message of President Nixon, I seem to discover a certain contradiction in that he also spoke favourably of the Ostpolitik but at the same time seemed to be worried that Chancellor Brandt would be forced by some domestic political events to give away more than the alliance in the West would like. Do you feel that that's a danger?

I don't myself share these preoccupations. It seems to me that the German Government policy which Chancellor Brandt has advocated is based firmly upon Germany being a member of the Western alliance. You know, Chancellor Brandt has said many times that he doesn't agree with the old German policy of ascendancy in Europe and so on, that he wants to be a member of a strong Western alliance and a Western community, and that that is one very solid part of his policy. The other is to use this base in order to try to promote better relations with the East and particularly to break the old patterns that seemed to result in an endless round of hostility and confrontations.

Would you say that perhaps those contradictory things one finds in the Nixon message indicate some kind of a concern in Washington that the initiative in East-West relations might be taken away from there and be taken up in Bonn?

I didn't detect that. No, I read those sections of the message that the President put forward, and he seemed to me to welcome some independence and greater strength in Europe.

At the same time, though...

Yes, he was also a bit concerned that there might be some leadership being given in Europe that might be contrary to the interests of the United States.

Well, right...

That is natural enough. The leadership of the United States in the world has been questioned, just as the leadership of Germany in Europe was questioned at one time. And it is a very nice balance that has to be struck. However, my reading of recent events is that there is beginning to be a better balance between Europe and America and...

But there are some people in America, that is in Washington, who don't seem to like that very much.

Well, maybe there are, but we, as Canadians, rather like it. After all, we had ourselves been advocating much the same policy. We had said, the time had come for Europe to take a much larger share of the burden of defence in Europe, that we still wanted to play a part, and it wasn't that we were withdrawing but simply that there was reason for a reassessment of the respective burdens. And this has been the same message of President Nixon.

In this reshuffling, let's say, of the alliance could you say that Canada is tending more towards Europe?

Yes. It's very difficult to define terms here. As far as Canada is concerned we recognize that if we are not going to

be dominated by the United States culturally, economically and so on, that we must encourage relationships with other countries. And Europe is an obvious area. Europe itself is uniting, is becoming stronger, we have opportunities for trade. Our people come in general from Europe, there's an opportunity for exchange of culture, information, and so on. So that we look upon our contacts with Europe as a means of counterbalancing the United States. On the other hand, when it comes to the defence of Europe, we also believe that it is right that there should be a reassessment of the respective burdens and that Canada should be able to transfer more of its effort over to the North American wing of the North Atlantic Alliance, rather than on the spot in Europe, although our presence there is very important, as you know. The fact that we decided to stay in Europe was far more important than the number of troops.

Yet, in talking to some of your counterparts in the NATO Alliance in Europe, I gained the impression that at one time, perhaps a year and a half ago, the feeling was going around that Canada was pulling out.

Yes, well I think that has now been corrected. You know, this Government decided they were going to have a fundamental look at Canadian foreign policy and defence policy. And that we undertook. Very few countries are prepared to say: "Here is our defence and foreign policy, what do you think about it?" And we started and we looked at every aspect of it. We said: "Could we be neutral? Could we be non-aligned? Could we get along just with an alliance with the United States? Could we get along if we were in the alliance without any troops in being in Europe?" And we rejected all of those. And we came out in favour of continuing in an alliance with the United States in NATO and with troops, although a smaller number, in Europe. Now, having done that, we were a much more loyal and dependable member of the alliance than if all these questions were continuing to be raised.

Q. After this reappraisal of Canadian foreign policy--if I asked you to summarize your actual position after the reappraisal, how would you put it?

A. I think that the big change that has taken place is in how we look at our foreign policy. I'm conscious of the fact that before the review had been made many Canadians were saying: "Well, what is Canada's role in the world?" As a result of the foreign policy review and of the various assessments that have been made subsequently, people are now saying: "No, how do we best promote Canadian interests in the world?" If in the course of that we have a role to play, that's incidental. It isn't the purpose of our foreign policy to be the link between Europe and America or the conciliator or the compromiser or the fixer....

Q. It is not...?

A. It isn't. No. Right. Our purpose, as is the purpose of the United States, of France, of Britain, of Germany, of any other country you can think of, to promote the national objectives of Canadians. That isn't a selfish policy. That just is what it is. Those national objectives might be very magnanimous such as more aid to developing countries, but that is a national objective. We're not in that in order to be good fellows in the world, we're in that to promote what we consider to be one of the objectives that Canadians share.

Q. Now this involves a continued membership in NATO, though at a reduced level?

A. That's right.

Q. Does this also mean that Canada will make some kind of an effort of an association or affiliation with the European Common Market?

A. I don't think that we will apply, for example, for associate membership as some countries have. One of the reasons for this is that we are very concerned about this growth of another preferential area around Europe. We're not so much concerned about the fact that Britain and Norway and Denmark and Ireland join the Common Market as full members. We are concerned that there are a number of other countries that haven't taken on all the obligations of membership that are going to be associated in a preferential arrangement, not only neutral countries in Europe but countries along the Mediterranean and so on. And what we see emerging is a preferential area that will appear to be directed against the rest of the world, and in particular against the United States and ourselves.

Q. So here our interests run rather parallel with the United States? On this particular question.

A. They do. On that particular question almost exactly parallel.

Q. Does that make...?

A. Well perhaps I ought to go on and say, however, what we have been saying to both the Europeans and to the Americans is: for goodness sakes, don't get into a trade war. Because the Americans don't like the preferential areas and the Europeans say, well the Americans are going isolationist, or are going protectionist. We say, you know, there are too many common interests at stake here, in the North Atlantic world, to allow that sort of a trade confrontation. It would be very sterile and very destructive. So that before that begins,

for goodness' sakes get together and let's have a talk. So, I've been...passing on this message wherever I can.

Q. Is there a danger that Canada will get caught in a squeeze?

A. It could be, and that's one of the reasons--in order to illustrate my point, the reason that we are taking an active role in promoting good trade relations between Europe and America and trying to avoid a trade war is not only because that's good for the world, but it's because Canadians have a very special interest in it, since we would be the country most likely to get caught in the squeeze.

Q. How about a better understanding between Canada and Eastern Europe--the Soviet Union, on that same basis of better trade and better relations?

A. Yes, this is proceeding apace. The trade with Eastern Europe is building up. We now have trade agreements with practically all the Eastern European countries. I think our trade is probably developing most quickly with Yugoslavia, which is an interesting case because that's a country that is non-aligned but is a Communist country of a particular kind. The Prime Minister is going to the Soviet Union--the first time that a Prime Minister has gone to the Soviet Union from Canada. I was in Yugoslavia and Romania--made the first trip as a Canadian Foreign Minister to Romania. We're building up our trade with Poland and Czechoslovakia. These relations would have developed, of course, much more rapidly if it hadn't been for the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.

Q. Right.

A. Along with the Poles and others.

Q. We've lost the chance of selling the Romanians an atomic reactor, haven't we?

A. I'm not sure. They have postponed the decision.

Q. One had the feeling there that perhaps the Soviets had applied some pressure.

A. Maybe. Maybe, but the Romanians have said, well, this is just a postponement, and we're still hoping that we can.

Q. Mr. Sharp, why do we not have Embassies in Bulgaria and Romania, although these two countries have representations in Ottawa?

A. Well, I've been fighting for a little more money for my Department. And we have gone through a period of very serious curtailment of Government expenditures, and since the Department of External Affairs couldn't escape, and

most of our expenditures are on personnel, we had to close some offices. We're gradually, however, beginning to move out again. We've established, of course, an Embassy in Peking, and I expect there'll be one or two early announcements. We have to have a strict order of priority, however. We don't want to open offices everywhere just for the form, but I expect that, within the next few years, we will have to extend our representation in Eastern Europe, and should.

You mentioned establishing an Embassy in China. Now, does that generally...can that be interpreted as an increasing interest in the Far East?

Yes it does. It represents, of course, first of all, a diplomatic initiative on Canada's part. We believed that it is not in the interests of the world to isolate Peking. Now I know, and most people know, that Peking to some extent has isolated itself, but when we saw an opportunity of moving to establish relations and to help them get into the United Nations, we felt we should. It is part of our policy to recognize governments not on the basis of whether we agree with their policies, but on the basis of whether they are the government of the area, and there could be no question about it that Peking had a greater claim to be the government of China than did the government at Taiwan. So, this was the first reason. The second reason was our growing interest in the Pacific. You know, Japan is now our third trading partner, and we're having closer and closer relations with Southeast Asia and South Asia, but the big gap in between was China where we were...where we recognized a government that didn't exercise sovereignty over many of the Chinese people.

Q. Southeast Asia. What's your reaction to the developments in this area, particularly as the Minister responsible for a Department that is involved in this area in the International Control Commission? What do you think of Laos for instance?

A. As a member of the International Control Commission, we have been trying for some months to get the commission to investigate the complaints that had been made by the Royal Laotian Government about invasion of Laos. And we've been completely unsuccessful.

Q. As a result of the refusal of the Polish and Indian Governments to do anything or...?

A. Yes, yes they would. Yes, they refused to take any action at all. When the South Vietnamese invaded Laos we raised the question again, and we said, well now let's investigate all these complaints, and we're talking with the Indians and the Poles, and I can't be very optimistic about it, however. Nevertheless, I believe it is necessary to proceed with this initiative because if we cannot carry out this mandate, which is to observe the breaches of the ceasefire,

then what is it all about? Moreover, how seriously can you take the efforts that are being made to try to protect the sovereignty of Laos and Cambodia? So, while as I say, we haven't had very much success so far, we are persisting. And parallel with this are, of course, the other ideas of trying to get the Geneva powers to meet again, and generally we're in favour of that, but as a member of the I.C.C. we say we have a primary responsibility, and that is to see if we can't get the facts.

Can the Government of Canada bring any pressure to bear on Washington not to extend the war in Indochina?

I don't think any more pressure than anyone else. We have said publicly, and we've expressed the same views to the Government of the United States, that every effort should be made to end the war in Indochina, and I must say that since President Nixon took office there has been a very substantial reduction in the American involvement, and if there is any justification for the invasion of Cambodia and Laos, not by the Americans in the case of Laos, but by the South Vietnamese, it is that it's a protection to the flank of the Americans as they are withdrawing, because I'm satisfied that President Nixon does want to get the Americans out of Viet Nam if he possibly can.

Q. But the invasion of Laos as such cannot be approved of, I don't think. Do you feel that?

A. No. No, I don't think that the invasion of Laos by the North Vietnamese or the South Vietnamese can be. It seems to me that the situation there is not improving in the whole of Indochina. All that is improving is the American participation which is being reduced, and that is an improvement. But that area will have to decide its own future, and providing it is left to decide its own future, then I don't think that we can complain or that we should try to intervene. If outside powers intervene, that's a different matter.

Q. In the Middle East, Mr. Sharp, things are again at the point where an explosion might start any time. If it's to be prevented and if there's to be any kind of United Nations action there would Canada be willing to participate in the United Nations force in the Middle East?

A. Yes, in principle we would. We are convinced, however, after our experience in the Middle East and in Indochina, and in Cyprus and so on, that it is most important that the terms of reference of any peacekeeping force be very clearly stated. Otherwise, the peacekeeping force cannot fulfil its purpose or it becomes not a contribution to peace but potentially a detriment. That is, it may result in unnecessary delays in the reaching of a settlement, or on the other hand,

its presence, being uncertain, results in increased uncertainty about the prospects for peace or of a truce. So we believe, in the interests of the world, not only in our own interests, that the next time that any peacekeeping forces are established, the rules of the game should be very clearly stated in advance-- know exactly what we're to do, how long, under what circumstances we can withdraw, and that that is agreed to by both sides. not just by one side.

Q. If the terms of reference are clear, Canada would participate?

A. Yes, we would. Yes, we've made this quite clear. And the same is true in Indochina. We would again, providing we didn't have to go through this farce.

Q. It was a farce?

A. Oh yes, I think it was.

Q. You're going to Africa at the end of this week. What is the purpose?

A. This is the first visit of a Secretary of State for External Affairs for Canada to any part of Africa. This is in response to invitations from the countries that I'm visiting and in return for visits from their Ministers and Heads of State, in some cases. I'm visiting both Eastern Africa and Western Africa. I hope to go to Côte d'Ivoire, Congo (Kinshasa), Nigeria, Tanzania, and Zambia. We have, as you know, been stepping up our aid in Africa quite substantially. Not only in the Commonwealth Countries of Africa--the former British colonies--but also in Francophone Africa where our projects and so on are comparable in importance with those in English-speaking Africa. So, this is an opportunity to show our interest in these countries, to observe first-hand what we're doing, and to make personal contact with some of their leading people.

Q. Is this part of the foreign policy of self-interest that Canada has...?

A. Yes, this is a very interesting aspect of it. People say: Why Francophone Africa? Why this increased interest? Well, it's obviously because there is a very substantial part of the Canadian people who can associate themselves with Francophone Africa more readily than they can with Anglophone Africa. So this gives a point of contact. It makes foreign policy much more real to French-speaking Canadians than if we don't have those contacts, and we've joined this Francophone Agence de coopération and so on. And this shows the very close relationship between domestic policy, which is directed to the creation of a genuinely bilingual country where English-and-French-speaking people co-operate within a



single state, and the relation between that and the fact that our foreign policy and all its projections must also reflect our interest in French-speaking as well as English-speaking countries.

Will you be talking to the people of the countries that you visit about the British arms sales to South Africa?

Oh, inevitably. I'm sure that it will be probably the first point of discussion with their Foreign Ministers and other officials.

Do you think the Commonwealth Committee will continue to operate?

I can't be very optimistic at the present time. The other day when Nigeria indicated that it didn't intend to be there, I said that we were not withdrawing, but the canvass that has been made of the other countries doesn't indicate very much enthusiasm for going ahead. As yet we haven't abandoned hope, but I can't be very optimistic at the present time. I think this is a great pity because this committee might have been able to look not just at that particular question of arms sales by Britain or any other country--other countries are supplying arms too--but, not only at that question, but what happens in Southern Africa. You know, after all, suppose the British don't send any arms to South Africa. The problem is still there.

Right.

And as our Prime Minister said one day in Singapore, surely it's in everyone's interest to avoid creating another Viet Nam in Southern Africa. Now this is a common interest we all have, as Commonwealth countries. We're a microcosm of the world, and the great advantage of the Commonwealth is that we can sit down and talk one to another without having our speeches reproduced. You know, this is what it's all about, and if we can't deal with those issues, the Commonwealth doesn't have the kind of meaning that we think it should have. So this committee could have, we believe, and perhaps still can perform some function, but the problem is still there.

And it won't go away?

It won't go away. And therefore if we can't sit down and talk rationally about that problem, then we're, you know, we're missing a great opportunity.

By and large, Mr. Sharp, do you think that Canada's role in international affairs will increase or remain the same?

Increase, inevitably, as the world grows smaller, and as our trade, and our tourism, and our cultural contacts increase. I think that even though we're not relatively as important as we were at the end of the Second World War when we emerged as one of the countries that was relatively unscathed, while our European allies were destroyed and Japan was destroyed, and so on, we're now absolutely very much more important than we were then, and we have many, many more contacts. So I think that foreign policy is going to become an even more active interest for Canadians than ever before.

President Nixon's message goes through just about the whole world, or all the crisis points anyway, but it doesn't include Canada. How do you feel about that?

Oh, I think rather relieved. It means they're not trying to push us about. We're being left to make our own decisions, and they're not apparently concerned to push us in any direction or another. I'm not really too concerned about the fact that he doesn't consider us so worrismatic as to have to make reference to us. On the whole I believe that we do better in the development of our policy when we can work independently of the United States and not under some sort of general policy that the Americans think is suitable to us. So our whole...I rather like it, except for one thing, and that is that in trade the Americans understand the importance of Canada, and in the sections dealing with trade, then we get a very prominent part. But in the political issues, we're apparently not, of course, a source of great concern to them. On the other hand, they don't seem to feel it necessary to lay down any general directions for the pursuit of our policy.

This is not to be read as an indication that they think that we're the next...the 51st state?

No. I don't think so. No, I never interpret it this way. I believe that, you know, after all our policy has been very independent of the United States recently. The fact that they haven't made any mention of the fact that we have recognized China can be read either one of two ways. Either that they weren't too much concerned about it, or alternatively, well, that's the Canadians' policy and that's up to them to defend, not for us to say anything about.

So you feel there's a certain respect in Washington for Ottawa and its ways?

Oh, I think so. A growing respect. Our relations with the Americans, I think, are on a very sound footing now. We are recognized as being people who speak our mind when it's necessary but not people that go around berating the Americans

on every occasion, but people who have their own independent point of view, reasonable but firm people who don't like being pushed about. So that's the way I like it.

Fine. Thank you.