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A DIPLOMATIC TOUR OF EASTERN EUROPE

Statement by the Honourable Paul Martin,
Secretary of State for External Affairs,
in the House of Commons, November 17, 1966.

I should like to take this opportunity to make a brief report to the House on the talks I had during my recent official visit to Poland, the U.S.S.R. and Italy. When in Rome I concluded my exchanges with a valuable talk with the Pope.

In both Poland and the Soviet Union, I was cordially received. Their leaders listened to the Canadian views which I presented. We made progress on a number of bilateral matters. On some major international issues there was evidence of common interest. I should not, however, want to hide the fact that there is still a considerable distance between us in many important areas.

In all three countries my most extensive discussions were with the foreign ministers, but I also had the opportunity to meet and talk with many other leaders. In Poland I talked with Prime Minister Cyranciewicz and President Ochab. In the U.S.S.R., I talked with President Podgorny, Prime Minister Kosygin, the First Deputy Prime Minister Mr. Polyansky and General Secretary Brezhnev. Finally, in Italy, I was able to exchange views with President Saragat, Prime Minister Moro and Deputy Prime Minister Nenni.

The Polish Government is desirous of settling the long-outstanding matter of the claims of certain Canadians arising out of post-war nationalization, and we expect to enter in the very near future into detailed negotiations to that end.

We have agreed with the Soviet Union to enter into early negotiations for the conclusion of a comprehensive agreement on cultural, scientific and technical exchanges in order to ensure better reciprocity and to raise further the level of mutually beneficial exchanges between the two countries. We have also agreed on the opening of a Soviet Consulate-General in Montreal to deal with the growing flow of trade and persons both ways. It was agreed that Canada has the right to open a comparable office in the U.S.S.R. whenever it wishes.

It is true, as news reports stated, that Mr. Gromyko raised with me the questions of the extradition of alleged "war criminals" and the so-called "anti-Soviet campaign" in Canada. I explained to him the Canadian law on the former subject, law designed to protect the individual against arbitrary action. On the latter, I made it clear that there was not and had not, as suggested, been any "anti-Soviet campaign" inspired or encouraged by the Canadian Government. I pointed out that Canada is a free country and that the Government is not in control of the news media. I also urged Prime Minister Kosygin, on humanitarian grounds, to continue to facilitate the movement of close relatives from the U.S.S.R. to Canada in order to assist the reunification of families. I have every hope that there will be an amelioration in the reunification of families as a result of what Mr. Kosygin said to me. I sought to impress on him how much this means to Canadians who come from that part of the world.

In Italy, needless to say, my talks took place in the very easy and open atmosphere to which we have long been accustomed in our relations with Italy, our friend and ally. We were readily able to reach agreement on some bilateral matters and, in large measure, we found ourselves in agreement on the international issues.

I was happy to explain to Italian Government leaders the implications for immigration from Italy of the recent White Paper, and to assure them both of our great appreciation of the contribution made by the Italians who have already come to Canada and our hope and desire that the flow should continue. I signed with Mr. Fanfani an exchange of letters providing for the creation of a Canadian Institute in Rome. This, and the cultural agreement on which we agreed to open negotiations soon, will help greatly to enhance cultural and academic exchanges between Canada and Italy.

In all three capitals, I held useful discussions on the current problems before the United Nations and on the efforts being made at the ENDC and elsewhere to achieve certain partial measures of disarmament as tangible steps towards our objective of general and complete disarmament. I do not intend to report, of course, on the policy positions of the countries I visited with respect to these several questions. That is for them to do. But I did find everywhere a recognition of the importance of the further strengthening of the United Nations. I explained the Canadian stand on some of the current subjects before the organization, particularly our hope that this Assembly will be able to come to some agreement on peace keeping. Mr. Gromyko raised with me his Government's interest in the item on non-intervention in the internal affairs of other countries, and I assured him of our general agreement with this standard of international conduct, as well as our support for the principle of the self-determination of peoples.

The Polish and Soviet Governments, I conclude, are anxious, as we and the Italians are, about the possible further proliferation of nuclear weapons in the world. There have been recent bilateral discussions between the United States and the U.S.S.R. on the subject of non-proliferation, and the Soviet side assured me that they are anxious to arrive at a treaty in this respect. I already know from my talks with Mr. Rusk that this continues to be the wish of the United States. If this were achieved, it would be a

very important step which would undoubtedly contribute towards the reduction of tensions in Europe and other parts of the world.

I confirmed by my talks in Poland and the Soviet Union that there is in those countries a desire to work for a further détente in Europe and an improvement in the atmosphere there in order to create conditions for a satisfactory settlement of the outstanding European problems. I pointed out that, as a NATO member, this was very much the Canadian view. It would not be realistic to expect such a settlement to come quickly, but increasing contacts between East and West, such as the official visits which I have just made, will certainly help. I emphasized the Canadian conviction that our friend and ally the Federal German Republic was genuinely anxious to improve its relations with the Eastern European countries and to make its contribution to the détente.

I know that members will expect me to speak particularly about my discussions on Vietnam. Let me make it quite clear that I took with me to Warsaw and Moscow no simple, magic formula to bring about an end to the war. This is an infinitely complicated situation. There IS no magic formula, and I made that very clear to the people with whom I spoke. I put forward Canadian views repeatedly in great detail, and I explained forcefully, on the basis of our very intimate knowledge of the United States and its policies and on the basis of our abiding friendship for that country, why certain over-simplified suggestions which have been put forward from time to time for ending the war were not the most realistic way of moving towards a settlement, quite apart from the view one might hold of the merits of the case. I refer, of course, to the proposal for a unilateral decision to stop the bombing of North Vietnam, unconditionally and for good, without any indication as to what the other side might do in return to start towards de-escalation of the conflict or towards negotiations.

I put forward in considerable detail to the Polish and Soviet leaders Canadian views on the possible future role of the Vietnam Commission and certain suggestions as to steps which might be taken to lead us away from a military towards a political settlement. Our views were listened to most carefully. I am sure that they will be studied attentively in Warsaw and Moscow, just as we will seriously study the positions they took, and I hope that this, in itself, will be a modest contribution towards a solution. I cannot say that I detected the prospect of any immediate change in the views of these two Communist powers whose interests are so deeply engaged in the Vietnam question. But I am convinced that they are desirous of reaching a peaceful settlement, among other reasons for the beneficial effect this will have on East-West relations in general. Thus, despite very substantial differences between us, there seems to be some identity of view as to the desire to see the conflict brought to an end.

Poland and the Soviet Union were new to me. I must say that, even after this brief visit, I think the forces which help to shape the policies of their governments are more clearly discernible. I saw the reconstruction of the historic city of Warsaw, so hideously scarred by war. I saw ancient Krakow and the horror that was Auschwitz, now silent witness to the massacre of how many millions of the Jewish people. I saw Moscow, the vibrant capital of one

of the two most powerful countries on earth. I saw Leningrad, that creation of Peter the Great, which lost almost a million of its inhabitants in 900 days of wartime siege. And had it not been for bad weather, I should have seen Kiev, the historic capital of the Ukraine.

As I visited all these places and talked with their people, I further confirmed my assessment of what is taking place in Eastern Europe -- and there is certainly change afoot. My thoughts also turned instinctively to the hundreds of thousands of people in Canada of Polish descent, of Ukrainian and Russian descent. I understood their love for the countries from which they and their ancestors had come and I understood better some of the sources of the great contributions which they have brought to Canada.

I was honoured to be received in Rome by His Holiness the Pope and was again impressed by his wise and compassionate understanding of the troubles of the world, as well as by his great spirit of ecumenism which has done so much to bring the Christian churches closer together. His Holiness commended the efforts of Canada to bring about peace. I told him that the leadership which he and other great religious leaders were continuing to give to international collaboration met with warm support and appreciation in Canada. I can only say that I have the strongest hope that my talks with the Pope as with the other leaders will be shown to have yielded productive results.

In conclusion, I should say that members of the House will be gratified to know that in all the countries I visited there was ample evidence of the high regard in which our country and its people are held, and of a wish to work with us towards the objective we all endorse of creating a peaceful world.

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