



## STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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### PROSPECTS FOR A SUMMIT MEETING

Statement by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. Sidney E. Smith, over the CBC Radio Network Sunday, April 20, 1958

As Secretary of State for External Affairs, I daily deal with the broad range of external relations with which Canada is concerned in this complex age. Among these, the need to find some means of working out peaceful solutions for issues which divide the Western world and the Soviet Union is at the present time uppermost in my mind. The prospect of another world conflagration that could let loose modern weapons of horrifying destructive force and risk the extinction of our civilization is not one which any responsible government can contemplate today. The course of both reason and self-interest for East and West alike lies in the search for a durable peace. The pressing need is, therefore, to explore ways in which existing tensions can be reduced and then to lay a firm foundation for mutual understanding on which the ultimate settlement of outstanding differences can be built.

During recent months, there has been much discussion in the press, on radio and on television as to the value of convening a high level conference at which the world's leaders might discuss some of the major problems in a spirit of compromise. This matter has gained prominence through the extensive exchange of correspondence between heads of government on the question of a summit conference. I propose this evening to give you some indication of Canadian thinking on such a meeting.

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 not be an easy task. A number of items, most of them dealing with various aspects of disarmament, have already been suggested in the correspondence between the leaders of the Soviet Union and the West. The gap between the proposals made by either side is considerable and unfortunately there has been a tendency, as I mentioned earlier, for some of the agenda items to be submitted in the form of prejudged proposals. If we are to approach the summit with an open mind and a desire to reach agreement, we will have to settle on objectively formulated topics. I believe that agreement on this delicate question will be facilitated if the diplomatic negotiations consider the agenda in somewhat more general terms. Such broad subjects as disarmament or European security could surely first be accepted, and then the range of sub-topics under these headings, which both sides could agree to discuss, could be explored.

I conclude with a word of caution. A summit meeting will not, I feel sure, produce any magic solution for all the problems that beset our troubled world, but I believe that a start can be made in decreasing tension and settling some problems or at the very minimum in setting up the machinery for this active and positive consideration. You will recall that on the initiative of the West we had one of these summit meetings in 1955 when the

leaders of the United States, United Kingdom, France and the Soviet Union met in Geneva. Although this meeting did not produce all the concrete results some of us hoped it would, it was by no means entirely barren. We must now continue from where Geneva left off. This may well mean that we should hold a series of meetings at various levels. Indeed, it is my view that we would be well advised not to entertain too great expectations for any single meeting. Rather, we should look into the future and envisage gradual progress through a number of meetings. With advantage we might also provide for the systematic maintenance of consultation between meetings in order that unsolved issues could be kept under continuous review. As the Greek historian Plutarch once wrote, "Perseverance is more prevailing than violence; and many things which cannot be overcome when they are together, yield themselves up when taken little by little".

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