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CANADA AND NATO

An address by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. Sidney E. Smith, at the 65th Annual Meeting of the Canadian Life Insurance Officers Association, Seigniory Club, May 27, 1958.

... I intend to speak today about one important element in the pattern of our foreign relations. I refer to the North Atlantic Treaty - the insurance policy which, as a nation, we have taken out to deter aggression and to collaborate with our allies in the pursuit of peace. Our NATO insurance is vital to our national life; the annual premiums are high. Because you in your profession appreciate the value of sacrifice and prudent foresight, I know that NATO needs no justifying in your eyes. Yet I am sure that you will agree that it does no harm for the insured to take stock periodically of their policies, to attend meetings of shareholders, and to consider whether their changing needs are cared for by the investment which they have made. It is in this sense that I desire to speak to you about NATO and in particular about the meeting of NATO Foreign Ministers which I attended last month in Copenhagen.

Fifteen nations were represented: two (the United States and Canada) from North America; three from the Scandinavian area (Denmark, Norway and Iceland); three bordering the Mediterranean (Italy, Greece and Turkey); and the remaining seven from what we may call Western Europe (Belgium, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, and the United Kingdom). Of these fifteen members, twelve are original signatories of the treaty, which came into effect in 1949. Two, Greece and Turkey, joined in 1951; the remaining one, the Federal Republic of Germany, became a member only three years ago, in May 1955.

It is, I think, useful when we consider the current activities of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to recall the circumstances of its establishment nearly ten years ago. It has been said many times and with reason that NATO is not simply a military response to a military challenge. True, the element of military danger was undoubtedly present at the time when the Treaty was being prepared - the Berlin crisis was a sharp and timely reminder of the Soviet mood - and even

today the Soviet military machine looms before us in an outline and with a motive power which leaves us no alternative but to be vigilant and strong ourselves. But if the force of immediate circumstances accelerated its birth, yet it remains true that to some extent NATO was the product of a natural evolution - an association of peoples who for the most part see eye to eye, who have the same desire and determination to preserve their traditional institutions and ways of life, and who desire to collaborate not only in the immediate military task at hand, but in much wider fields - economic and social, as well as political. I stress the words "desire to" collaborate in these non-military fields. We are still at an early stage in the development of these non-military forms of co-operation and much remains to be done if NATO is to be true to its own collective quality and capacity. As a prelude to what I shall have later to say about the Copenhagen Conference, I may say that I believe that the place of NATO in world history will depend on the success which its members enjoy in developing their political, economic and social partnership. For in equipping ourselves to contend with the various manifestations of Soviet power, and to achieve a mature and harmonious relationship with nations and peoples who desire to remain uncommitted to either the Western or the Soviet coalition, it will simply not be enough to place our trust in military instruments of policy alone.

The recent meeting in Copenhagen took place in the palace of Christiansborg, the picturesque parliament buildings of Denmark, where visiting representatives received from their hosts a welcome of genuine warmth and friendship. Tourists think of Copenhagen as the city of open sandwiches. I think of it as the city of open hearts and, indeed when I look back on the discussions that we held there, as the city of open minds.

I am convinced that this was a most successful meeting. I came away from it profoundly impressed by the sense of unity and co-operation which was in evidence. I well remember only last autumn the serious blow which NATO suffered as a consequence of the dispute between the United States and the United Kingdom on the one hand, and France on the other, with regard to the supply of arms to Tunisia. It says much for the underlying tolerance and understanding among the nations concerned that this issue has not interfered with the development of co-operation in a wider sphere. It is a mark of the confidence which has been developed amongst the NATO allies that the same three members of the Alliance are at this moment acting as trusted spokesmen of their partners in the conduct of negotiations with the U.S.S.R. on certain aspects of preparations for a summit meeting. I suggest that the achievement of such close co-ordination as is now being carried out in NATO is a historic and unique development among free and independent nations and is, in the words of the communique issued at the close of the Copenhagen meeting, one of the significant and promising events of our time.

Here I might remark on the debt which the Alliance owes to its Secretary-General, Mr. Spaak, whom we shall welcome tomorrow on his first official visit to Canada since he assumed his present post.

But, you may say: "This is all very well, this talk about the spirit of unity and co-operation, but what has NATO got to show for it?" This is a fair question and I shall try to answer it by reference to the proceedings and results of the Copenhagen meeting.

Question of Summit Meetings

The most vital items on the agenda of the Copenhagen meeting related to the general international picture confronting the alliance, and specifically to the trends of Soviet policy and to the attitude which Western countries should adopt towards the Soviet Union. Exchanges of view on these basic themes revealed a remarkable unanimity of approach. Take for example the question of meetings at the summit level.

When the Heads of Government of NATO countries met in Paris last December, they proposed, in an effort to resume negotiations with the Soviet Government, a meeting at the level of foreign ministers. This was a reflection of a conviction that some means must be found to break the deadlock which had prevailed on disarmament matters for many months.

The Soviet Government did not accept the NATO proposal. Instead they began to bombard the Prime Ministers of NATO countries, including Prime Minister Diefenbaker, and the leaders of some neutral nations, with lengthy letters ostensibly designed to secure general support for an early summit conference. Missives are of course infinitely preferable to missiles but unfortunately the contents of these Soviet missives, when they were carefully examined, proved disappointing. It became evident that behind the seemingly forthcoming attitude of the Soviet authorities, there lurked some very firm, inflexible conditions. Difficulties arose over the agenda and over the composition of the proposed summit meeting, and even the preparatory talks were hampered by Soviet insistence on the so-called principle of parity, which translated means that they were not prepared to sit down around a table with the United States, the United Kingdom and France unless two other governments of their own complexion were permitted to join the discussions.

Despite these and other difficulties which raised in the minds of Western governments serious doubts as to the real desire of the Soviet authorities for a meeting at the highest political level, the Western position has remained positive and flexible. At Copenhagen we resolved to continue our efforts to pave the way to the summit. As the communiqué issued at the close of the meeting put it: "The NATO governments will not be discouraged nor give up their attachment to

the principle of negotiation." We recognized, however, that while summit meetings are desirable if they offer prospects of reaching settlements on important questions, they are not the only way - or necessarily the best way - of conducting negotiations or of reducing international tension. A summit meeting could only be helpful if it were thoroughly prepared and if the atmosphere was right. Far better, in the absence of a proper atmosphere, to continue the patient probing, the diplomatic pick and shovel work so necessary to the achievement of results in international negotiations.

At the Copenhagen Meeting, I suggested that a forthcoming summit meeting might be regarded as one of a series of such meetings. It would not be the first but the second of a series of meetings of Heads of Government, since that held in Geneva in 1955 should be considered the first. This approach would recognize that there are a number of important and complicated problems between East and West which we cannot hope to settle satisfactorily at one meeting and that they called for a continuous process of high-level discussion and negotiation. In this way public opinion would not be misled into thinking that a single meeting at the summit will solve all the outstanding issues between East and West. If we follow this concept of a series of such meetings, then the next one, for which we are now preparing, could have a limited agenda and limited objectives without conveying the impression to the public at large that issues not considered at this meeting were not a proper subject for negotiation between East and West. Such matters would simply be deferred until a subsequent meeting and, if there were an increase in mutual confidence and understanding, there would be better prospects for agreement being reached at such a subsequent meeting or meetings.

Disarmament

You will, I hope, agree that the position which the NATO allies have taken in respect of a summit meeting reflects a real desire for progress. The same is true, I am convinced, with regard to the talks which were held at Copenhagen on the question of disarmament. You will recall that in August 1957 Canada joined with its principal allies in submitting a comprehensive set of disarmament proposals for consideration by the Soviet Union. These proposals met with a most disappointing response. The Soviet Union refused to accept them as a basis for discussion.

There followed a long and often frustrating period of several months during which both in the United Nations and in exchanges of letters with the Soviet Government the Western countries earnestly sought to find some way in which disarmament discussions could be resumed. The Soviet authorities found various procedural reasons why the resumption of negotiations on disarmament might better be deferred until a summit conference had been convened. We refused to accept a stalemate on these terms.

We kept on probing to see if there was not some limited foundation on which at least the beginnings of progress might be made.

I expect that you may have noted that in the past few weeks there has been a slight, nonetheless a potentially significant, loosening of the disarmament log jam. It came about in an unexpected way. Just before I left Canada for Copenhagen, the Soviet Union entered in the Security Council a provocative complaint relating to the state of defensive readiness of the United States Strategic Air Command. In itself this complaint had little or no effect as it was soon withdrawn by its Soviet sponsors. Yet it deserves to be recalled because it prompted the United States Government to make in the Security Council a constructive and imaginative proposal for the establishment of a zone of inspection in the Arctic designed as a means of preventing surprise attack across the polar regions. To the genuine disappointment of the NATO countries, including I can assure you the Government of Canada, the Soviet Union cast this proposal aside and vetoed it in the Security Council.

This was the background against which the talks on disarmament took place in Copenhagen. It is not surprising that a strong echo of Western disappointment at the Soviet attitude should have found its way into the final communiqué. But the conference did not limit itself to helpless expressions of regret. Despite the Soviet attitude, the foreign ministers considered that it might be possible to inaugurate expert technical discussions between representatives of the Soviet Union and the Western powers principally concerned on detailed measures of control over disarmament, even though the precise disarmament measures may not yet have been agreed upon. We had particularly in mind measures to prevent surprise attack and to detect nuclear explosions.

Speaking for the Canadian Government, I laid particular stress on the need for further study of measures for inspection and control. I have always thought that such measures are fundamental to the success of any disarmament negotiations. For the West, control means confidence, and confidence is what is presently lacking. I proposed, and other ministers agreed, that the North Atlantic Council should itself consider the possibility of carrying out within its own membership studies and experiments on the technical problems of inspection and control. I had in mind that a pilot control scheme in the Arctic, or possibly in other regions, might not only permit us to improve our own understanding of the technical problems involved, but would also provide crystal-clear evidence of the sort of measures which we would be prepared to put into operation on our own territories in collaboration with the Soviet Government. I thought it not too much to imagine that the Soviet Government might in time be invited to establish similar pilot schemes on Soviet territory so that, in some future negotiation perhaps in the United Nations - it might prove possible to arrange for Soviet participation in our schemes and our participation in theirs.

You will perhaps have noticed in the press recently that the Soviet Government has now agreed to a United States proposal for a meeting of experts to study the technical measures which would be required to implement effective systems of controlling and verifying nuclear explosions. I sincerely trust that Soviet willingness to participate in these technical studies carries the wider implication that the Soviet Government is now genuinely interested in responding to the Western desire for early progress on the disarmament problem. There is a saying that a second marriage is a triumph of hope over experience. Our earlier experience in dealing with the Soviet Union has certainly not been promising, but we have not lost hope that by means of small beginnings it may be possible to create the atmosphere of increased confidence on which more substantial agreement depends.

Economic Co-operation

I desire to touch briefly on one other aspect of the Copenhagen meeting. I refer to the question of economic co-operation among the NATO partners. This was the subject on which the Canadian Delegation placed particular emphasis and I was gratified that other ministers held the same views. There was general agreement on the importance of co-ordinated effort to ensure economic prosperity - notably by the expansion of international trade and by aid to under-developed countries. Consultation on methods and machinery for co-operation in this field will take place within the Alliance.

I stress one point here which I think is not always understood by those who talk of economic co-operation in NATO. I think that it is a mistake to imply that NATO will or should itself become an effective organ for economic co-operation. What is implied, however, is that the principles of economic collaboration set out in Article 2 of the Treaty should engender and inspire efforts by member countries to solve specific problems amongst themselves or in other organs where these topics can be more appropriately pursued. I have in mind in this regard the fact that there is already a great deal of enormously useful work being done under the United Nations, including the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance and the various Specialized Agencies, to promote the economic well-being of less developed areas of the world. The same is true, of course, of the Colombo Plan in which Canada is an active participant. I regard these projects as in a very real sense consistent with the objectives of economic co-operation which we have set ourselves to pursue in NATO.

Mr. Chairman, the agenda of this Copenhagen meeting did not include a discussion of the problems of NATO defence, which will be considered again at the meeting of the NATO Council to be held next December. I did, however, suggest to my colleagues

that there is a necessity for continuous study of the relationships between political and military decisions in NATO. We must above all avoid a situation in which the expansion and perfection of our military machine proceeds without regard for the changing international political climate. Our posture must be to hold up one hand in resolute defence and to keep the other in a gesture of friendship. While keeping our defence secure we must be alert to seize every opportunity to negotiate and to seek agreement which would reduce tension and remove the awful possibility of nuclear war.

Mr. Chairman, I am grateful for this opportunity of addressing you. I make no apology for discussing these matters. They concern us all. They have to do with our existence and our very survival.

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