



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
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59/28 SOME RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Notes from an address by Mr. John G. Diefenbaker, Prime Minister of Canada, to the Canadian Women's Press Club in Ottawa on September 8, 1959.

Canada is represented at various international conferences and serves on many international bodies. It is the general policy of the Government to appoint women to such international conferences and bodies, and to domestic boards and commissions, especially where the subject matter is of particular concern to women.

Democracy cannot be truly effective without consultation. While the government must make the choice in all appointments and cannot abdicate its responsibility to make the choice, women's organizations can be helpful with suggestions of qualified women so that the best available will be chosen.

It is my observation that one of the most encouraging signs on the world horizon today is the keen interest being taken by women everywhere in international affairs. This of course is as it should be, because women have a particular interest in the realization of the prime objective of all international relations, which is permanent peace for mankind.

In the past, wars have been largely begun, and carried on, and concluded by men. Only in the last great World War, with perhaps a few historical exceptions, have women from all walks of life had their full-scale part to play in the armed forces of the nations. If there is another world conflict it will not be a man's war--it will almost certainly be a war in which all the men and women and children of the nations involved will be at least participants.

The glories of such a war will be small, and the sufferings large. Women know this, and that is why in our country, as in others, their voices are being heard as never before insisting that in the future there must be peaceful settlement of any

dispute between nations. It is for this reason and in this spirit that I now say a few words to you about the international situation.

International Situation

What of the international situation? As you know, the Foreign Ministers' Conference in Geneva came to an end last month, after two prolonged sessions of negotiations devoted mainly to the problems of Berlin and German reunification. While no solution to these problems was found, the Conference must be regarded as worthwhile, especially when one reflects on the possible alternatives. The threats of unilateral action on Berlin and of the use of force, which were being uttered by Soviet spokesmen last November, have receded into the background.

Progress was not made on the broad question of reunification and European security. Differences over the Berlin situation were narrowed sufficiently to lay the groundwork for belief that some interim arrangement can be achieved pending a final settlement.

While the results of the Conference were neither dramatic nor conclusive, I continue to believe in the imperative need of negotiations between the Soviet Union and the West, while recognizing that quick and easy results cannot be expected from these negotiations.

The differences that divide are many and deep. The West is certainly not going to abandon its basic principles, and the Soviet Union will not modify its political philosophy to an extent that would make likely an early and comprehensive settlement of our differences.

I believe that in the pursuit of a settlement of these outstanding differences the West must be prepared to negotiate in many ways and at all levels and at great length, according to the opportunities which present themselves.

President Eisenhower's Initiative

It was with these considerations in mind that the Canadian Government gave immediate support to President Eisenhower's decision to arrange for an exchange of visits with Premier Khrushchev. The Canadian Government welcomed it as evidence of the willingness of President Eisenhower, in his capacity as leader of the major power in the Western world, to assume the responsibilities which the strength and position of his country bestow, no matter how onerous and unrewarding the task may be.

I applaud the initiative which President Eisenhower has directed towards the creation of an atmosphere which would facilitate the beginnings of what must be a long and difficult process of negotiation.

Similarly, the talks which the President has recently concluded with the heads of government in major capitals of Europe cannot but have a beneficial effect on the world situation. Before his departure, the President included amongst the purposes of his trip the support of Western unity; the search for progress on the problems of disarmament and German reunification; the strengthening of help to under-developed countries and the reaffirmation of the dedication of the United States to the North Atlantic Treaty.

In addition to his talks with heads of government, the President found time to attend briefly a meeting of the Permanent Council of NATO. He included in his comments on that occasion an assertion which I strongly endorse, to the effect that no member nation need take a second place in the Organization, and that NATO is animated by a spirit of equality as well as by a determination to work to preserve those ideals which we all cherish.

Canada's stand in this regard, which I made known in Paris and Bonn last December, is that Canada will not consent to any arrangement whereby any triumvirate of nations shall determine the policies of NATO.

The President has made it clear that in his talks with Khrushchev he will not regard himself as a spokesman for the West, and that he will not be negotiating. His stated purpose is to explore Mr. Khrushchev's thinking and to find out for himself whether Mr. Khrushchev has any proposals which could reduce tensions and lead to beneficial future developments.

The exchange of visits between President Eisenhower and Premier Khrushchev may not settle the question of a summit meeting. These are essentially bilateral talks which I hope will create a situation more conducive to negotiation. The Canadian Government has not changed its view that progress towards settlement of major international problems might be facilitated by a summit conference.

While long range processes are going forward, certain current developments are encouraging. The fact that both the United States and the U.S.S.R. have undertaken to continue for the time being their suspension of nuclear tests is of importance, and gives some confidence that progress can be made toward an international agreement with adequate safeguards.

Group for Disarmament Discussions

Some progress is being made on the long-standing problem of disarmament. As was announced on September 7, the major powers have been able to agree on the constitution of a new group to conduct disarmament discussions. This group will consist of ten countries. The five Western nations will be the United States, United Kingdom, France, Italy and Canada. Countries associated with the Soviet bloc will be the Soviet Union, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Roumania and Bulgaria.

Although the new group is being created by the four powers, it will have the advantage of the services of the United Nations Secretariat and will report to the United Nations Disarmament Commission, and through it to the General Assembly and the Security Council.

In the very near future the four major powers will inform the other members of the existing 82-member Disarmament Commission of this conclusions in this regard, and will indicate their intentions of conducting through the new group further discussions on the problems of disarmament.

It is worthy of note that the Soviet Union, after refusing for many months to participate in disarmament discussions has now agreed to join with a representative group of interested nations in tackling the tremendous problem of reducing the armaments burden.

The extensive review which Premier Khrushchev made available to "Foreign Affairs" magazine in its last issue regarding the Communist position on recent international development is of interest. As seen through the prism of Marxist ideology the present situation assures that Communism will ultimately triumph in its competition with the Western way of life. The West does not accept or share his opinion. We place our faith in the strength and resilience of freedom as practised in the Western democracies, who will never resort to war as a means of achieving their objectives.

In his review, Mr. Khrushchev argues that war is not necessary and that the two systems must learn to live side by side. Mr. Khrushchev's words would have carried more conviction if they had been accompanied by new proposals for settlement of outstanding issues. Nevertheless, it is to be hoped that the subdued tone of his views can be taken as a sign that he intends to approach his discussions with President Eisenhower in an open-minded and receptive spirit.

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