

MEETING OF COMMONWEALTH PRIME MINISTERS, 1955

(London, 26 January-9 February)

FINAL COMMUNIQUE

The Governments of the member nations of the Commonwealth are resolved to do their utmost to ease international strain. It is their aim, not only to bring any open hostilities to an end, but to promote conditions in which real peace can grow and thrive so that freedom and plenty may be enjoyed by all peoples.

Since the last Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers in 1953, agreements have been reached in various parts of the world which have had the effect of removing differences and widening the area of understanding among Governments and peoples. The Prime Ministers welcomed the settlement of the Trieste dispute. They recorded their satisfaction that, in the Middle East, the United Kingdom's differences with Egypt and Iran had been resolved. They looked forward to closer collaboration between all the countries of that area so that its economic development and the welfare of its peoples could be advanced. They welcomed, in South-East Asia, the end of hostilities in Indo-China and stressed the need for strict adherence to the conditions of the Geneva Agreement and for increased welfare and stability in that area.

The Prime Ministers were informed that the Commonwealth countries associated with the North Atlantic Treaty were convinced that the early ratification of the Agreements reached in London and Paris and the acceptance of Federal Germany into the community of the Western nations would mark an important advance towards the security and cohesion of Western Europe.

The Prime Ministers met at a time of tension in the Far East. In view of developments which occurred during their Meeting, their discussions of this problem assumed a special significance. They were united in their conviction that it was necessary that incidents should be avoided while means were sought for a peaceful outcome. They were confident that the intimate and personal discussions which they had held at this Meeting would be a valuable foundation for future consultations, with one another and with other countries directly concerned and for the development of their policies on this question.

The Prime Ministers noted the improvement in the outlook for world trade and prosperity which had taken place since the Commonwealth Finance Ministers met at Sydney in January 1954. They recognised that Commonwealth countries had made a substantial contribution to this by maintaining the stability of their currencies, by continuing their development programmes, in which the Colombo Plan had played its part, and by expanding their production. They had also continued their progressive approach towards the widest practicable system of trade and payments, which best serves the interest of the sterling area and Canada.

The Prime Ministers affirmed their determination to continue these policies of economic progress. They agreed, in particular, that all Commonwealth

countries should strive to develop further their resources and their earning power. By these means they could best consolidate their strength and make an increased contribution to economic stability throughout the world.

The Prime Ministers gave anxious thought to the problems of nuclear energy. The latest discoveries confront humanity with a force which is almost beyond the capacity of man's brain to comprehend or measure. They present a choice and a challenge. Is this vast power to be developed for the benefit of man, or is it to be used to bring ruin upon the human race?

The Prime Ministers once again declare that their countries will never embark upon aggression. Indeed, it is their hope that, when the peoples of the world understand the magnitude of the disaster which world war would bring all nations will shrink from violence and follow peaceful means of settling their differences. The annihilating power of the new weapons renders it imperative that sanity should prevail and that war should be prevented.

It is the aim of the Commonwealth countries to work for a disarmament agreement which includes forces and weapons of all kinds and is both comprehensive and effective. Commonwealth Governments have already devoted much time and thought to producing and furthering practical plans to achieve this purpose, and two of the Commonwealth countries are members of the Sub-Committee of the United Nations Disarmament Commission.

With international accord on disarmament, it would become possible to turn the vast resources of atomic energy increasingly into channels which benefit mankind. The Prime Ministers were informed of the progress made by the United Kingdom Government in the use of atomic energy for industrial and other peaceful purposes. They looked forward to the prospects of continued close co-operation between the United Kingdom and other Commonwealth countries in the development of the civil uses of atomic energy.

In the course of the Meeting, the Prime Minister of Pakistan informed the other Prime Ministers that Pakistan was about to adopt a republican form of constitution but desired to remain a member of the Commonwealth. They were assured that the people of Pakistan were resolved to maintain, despite this constitutional change, their steadfast adherence to the Commonwealth and their recognition of the Crown as the symbol of the free association of its sovereign members. In a declaration issued on February 4 they signified their agreement that Pakistan should continue on this basis to be a full member of the Commonwealth after becoming a republic. All the Prime Ministers reaffirmed that their countries would remain united as free and equal members of the Commonwealth, freely co-operating in the pursuit of peace, liberty and progress.

The Commonwealth is a unique association. Its countries contain a fourth of the world's population, embracing people of many races and religions. Among its members are countries of importance in all quarters of the globe. Its strength and influence in the world today are derived from this and from a common outlook which, in spite of differences of geography, religion and race, evokes a broadly similar response to most international problems of the day.

The Commonwealth countries do not pursue any selfish purpose. They seek no aggrandisement and will always oppose aggression. In concert with all who

share their ideals, they are resolved to do their utmost to further the cause of peace throughout the world.

8 February 1955

Heads of Delegation

Australia	The Rt Hon R G Menzies, Prime Minister
Britain	The Rt Hon Sir Winston Churchill, Prime Minister
Canada	The Rt Hon L S St Laurent, Prime Minister
Ceylon	The Rt Hon Sir John Kotelawala, Prime Minister
Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland	The Rt Hon Sir Godfrey Huggins, Prime Minister
India	Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister
New Zealand	The Rt Hon S G Holland, Prime Minister
Pakistan	The Hon Mohammed Ali, Prime Minister
Union of South Africa	The Hon C R Swart, Deputy Prime Minister