

MEETING OF COMMONWEALTH PRIME MINISTERS, 1956

(London, 27 June-6 July)

FINAL COMMUNIQUE

During the past ten days Commonwealth Prime Ministers have together reviewed the current state of international affairs. Their discussions have again revealed a sense of common purpose in their approach to the major problems of the day. The peoples of the Commonwealth all share the common heritage of Parliamentary democracy. They respect aspirations for freedom and self-government, and they take pride in what they themselves have done in helping to fulfil those aspirations.

This Meeting has been held at a significant stage in the development of international relations. A new element has been introduced by the growing recognition of the devastating power of thermo-nuclear weapons. Other developments of importance have taken place in the world, including changes in the Soviet Union. The common understanding which the Prime Ministers have reached in their review will form a valuable background which will assist each Government in the formulation and pursuit of its national policies.

Despite the high hopes with which the world emerged from the last war, new international tensions developed. These have given rise to increasing fears and suspicion. They have resulted in vast expenditures on armaments and economic distortions which have delayed the full development of the world's natural resources for the common good.

The Governments and peoples of the Commonwealth are united in their desire for peace. They seek friendly relations with all the peoples of the world and have no aggressive intent or design. War would bring disaster for many; world war could mean destruction for all. The policies of all Commonwealth countries will at all times be devoted to preserving and consolidating world peace. The Prime Ministers emphasised the importance they attach to the search for a comprehensive disarmament agreement.

The Commonwealth Governments will strive for a progressive improvement in the standards of life of their own peoples and will assist in similar efforts in other parts of the world. Since the end of the war, in addition to furthering their own economic development, they have done much to assist the development of other countries, through the United Nations and such organisations as the Colombo Plan, the Commission for Technical Co-operation in Africa South of the Sahara and by other means. They will continue in their efforts to secure prosperity as well as peace for all the peoples of the world.

In the course of the Meeting the Prime Ministers reviewed the significant developments in the Soviet Union in the context of international relations and world affairs. In this assessment they were helped by the reports made by those Ministers who have recently visited the Soviet Union or have held elsewhere personal discussions with the new Soviet leaders. The Prime Ministers

considered the recent decisions of the Soviet Government to reduce the numbers in their armed forces, their willingness to facilitate increased contacts between the Soviet Union and other countries, and their expressed desire for improved relations with other Governments. They welcomed these developments. A progressive improvement in the relations between the Soviet Union and the other Great Powers would help to remove the fear of war and serve the interests of world peace. They believe, however, that the removal of the causes of tension and the creation of mutual confidence and goodwill are essential if peace is to rest on secure foundations. The Governments of the Commonwealth countries will persevere in the search for just and lasting settlements of outstanding international problems. Unless such settlements can be reached, resources which might otherwise be used to improve the lot of man will continue to be devoted to armaments; and the fears which impel the peoples of the world to accept the burdens of defence will continue to distract and weaken mankind.

The Prime Ministers noted with regret that, since their last Meeting, no progress had been made towards German unity. They were informed of current proposals regarding the political and economic activities of the North Atlantic Alliance and the development of closer economic co-operation in Europe.

The Prime Ministers considered the situation in the Middle East. They reaffirmed their interest in the peace and stability of this area. They welcomed the efforts of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to ensure observance of the terms of the armistice agreements between Israel and the neighbouring Arab States. They agreed that all practicable steps should be urgently taken to consolidate the progress thus made and to seek a lasting settlement of this dispute.

The Prime Ministers were informed of the situation in Cyprus, and welcomed the unceasing efforts of the United Kingdom Government to find a solution acceptable to all concerned.

The Prime Ministers reviewed the situation in the Far East and South-East Asia. They noted the part which was being played by certain Commonwealth Governments in seeking to maintain peace in Indo-China. They looked forward to a continuing relaxation of tension in the Formosa area, and expressed the hope that unremitting efforts would be made to this end. Peaceful settlements of the problems in this area are imperative for stability in the Far East and for removing the dangers of conflict which would frustrate the hopes of peace. The Prime Ministers heard with interest a report from the Prime Minister of New Zealand on his recent visit to Japan. They were informed of the progress of constitutional advance in Malaya and of the negotiations on constitutional development in Singapore.

The Prime Ministers noted with satisfaction that Ceylon and certain other countries had recently been admitted to the United Nations. They recognised the important part which members of the Commonwealth had played in securing this extension of the Organisation. They expressed the hope that its membership could be broadened still further so that it might command a wider allegiance throughout the world.

The Prime Ministers agreed that it was of first importance for their countries to maintain and increase their economic strength. Each country, through sound internal economic policies and steady development of its resources and earning power, could help to strengthen the Commonwealth and the sterling area, and move steadily towards the agreed objective of the widest practicable system of trade and payments. The Prime Ministers noted with satisfaction the United Kingdom's determination to maintain and improve its capacity to serve as a source of capital for development in Commonwealth countries. They received reports on the development programmes of certain members of the Commonwealth. The Prime Ministers exchanged views on the development of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. They agreed that the civil use of nuclear energy constituted a valuable new sphere of co-operation within the Commonwealth, as well as with other countries, and they noted with satisfaction the progress already made in this field. The Commonwealth countries are already a major source of world supplies of uranium and thorium, and their resources in these materials are increasing. In most of these countries research organisations have been established to develop the use of nuclear energy as a source of power.

During the course of the Meeting, the Prime Minister of Ceylon stated that, in accordance with their declared policy, the Ceylon Government proposed to introduce in due course a republican constitution for Ceylon. He also stated that it was their intention that Ceylon should continue to be a member of the Commonwealth. The other Prime Ministers took note of this statement, and expressed their agreement to Ceylon's remaining a member of the Commonwealth.

The Prime Ministers considered the particular position of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in relation to Meetings of Commonwealth Prime Ministers. Taking into account the twenty years' attendance first by the Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia and now by the Prime Minister of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, they agreed that they would welcome the continued participation of the Prime Minister of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in Meetings of Commonwealth Prime Ministers.

Apart from the consideration of matters which are of common concern to all Commonwealth countries, these Meetings also afford opportunities for discussions outside the formal sessions. Advantage has been taken of these opportunities on this occasion. The continuing exchange of views on matters of common concern is an important element in the relationship between the member countries of the Commonwealth. It is of the utmost value that this should be supplemented at intervals by personal contacts between the political leaders of the Commonwealth countries, and in a rapidly changing world the need for these direct consultations has assumed a new importance.

6 July 1956

Heads of Delegation

Australia	The Rt Hon R G Menzies, Prime Minister
Britain	The Rt Hon Sir Anthony Eden, Prime Minister
Canada	The Rt Hon L S St Laurent, Prime Minister
Ceylon	The Hon Mrs S W R D Bandaranaike, Prime Minister
Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland	The Rt Hon Viscoũnt Malvern, 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 S G Strijdom, Prime Minister