

9. PROSPECTS FOR POLITICAL PROGRESS

With just days to go before the leaders of the world's major industrial democracies and the European Community begin their discussions, it is apparent that the Toronto Summit will have a considerable contribution to make to ongoing developments in the international political arena.

To be sure, the Canadian hosts remain firm in their desire that this will be an economic summit rather than a political one. And some of the potential which this Summit promised as a promotor of settlements in regional conflicts around the globe has now faded. But in a number of important political and social areas, there is still important work to be done.

The political discussions at the Toronto Summit will be dominated by concerns about how the west should conduct its relations with General Secretary Gorbachev's new Soviet Union. At the summit's opening dinner on Sunday

evening, President Reagan will begin with a report on his trip to the Soviet Union two and a half weeks ago. Margaret Thatcher has already heard from the President on this topic, and the foreign ministers of all Summit countries but Japan discussed the trip at their recent NATO Council meeting in Madrid. But many Summit leaders are anxious to hear at first hand from the President about several issues.

Heading the list is the President's desire for a fifth Summit with Gorbachev before a new U. S. President is inaugurated in January, Reagan's conditions for holding such a Summit, and what compromises he is prepared to make to get his long-awaited deep cuts in the strategic nuclear systems of the two superpowers.

Following from this directly is the issue of what might lie in store for the independent British and French strategic nuclear systems, and the short range nuclear weapons which NATO continues to operate in Europe. Tied into this complex is the need to strengthen NATO's conventional deterrence, either by vigorously pursuing mutual force reductions with the Warsaw Pact, or by

having America's NATO allies bear more of the burden in providing the troops the west needs to balance the east.

To address these questions seriously, the leaders will need to trade impressions and intelligence about the intentions and political situation of Mr. Gorbachev. Although his dominance of the current Soviet government now seems assured, the recent strike in Poland and the continuing unrest in Azerbaijan could well give his rivals new life, through the argument that Gorbachev is going too far, too fast, and endangering the political stability upon which all depends.

The Toronto summiteers will be vigilant in displaying a united front when they provide their answers to these issues before the television cameras after their deliberations end. But this emphasis on harmony will mask important differences of approach. While President Reagan has been a successful practitioner of the art of east-west arms control, he is a very late convert to the cause of detente, has only a few short months left

to realize his new-found vision, and is unconcerned with the details of what costs a new partnership with the Soviet Union might impose down the road. The Europeans, led by the phlegmatic Germans on the front line of the east-west divide, are far less subject to such outbursts of enthusiasm for hands-across-the-iron-curtain initiatives, and far less willing to break off contact with the east when hopes for detente are dashed. They will counsel a slow, steady and unified approach to the Soviets, and be quick to purge any language or suggestion that might give an increasingly impatient President his unilateral head.

In return the Europeans will be happy to help stage manage a summit in which President Reagan rides into the sunset still visually in charge of the cavalry of the west. They will, for example, allow him to take the lead in discussions on enhancing east-west economic relations - a topic long close to the European heart and pocketbook but now discovered by the President as a way of reinforcing the capitalist and democratic revolution he now sees starting in the Soviet Union.

But in doing so the Europeans will know that on such tough aspects of this issue as involving the Soviet Union in the world's international economic institutions, it is they, through their recent first-ever agreement between the European Community and Comecon, who have already taken the lead.

Unless there is a political breakout in the Monday morning session, or enough passion to inspire the leaders to return to security subjects at subsequent meals, the regional conflicts raging around the world will largely be delegated to the foreign ministers to discuss. The leaders themselves will want to take a brief look at the wider middle east problem, from the Iran-Iraq war in the east to the uprising in the Israeli-occupied territories in the west.

Here the Americans will seek and secure Summit approval for George Shultz's peace initiative. The Europeans will prevent any statement that contradicts the official European Community line on the subject. And the Japanese will ensure that the consensus, however

bland, is one which will allow Persian Gulf oil to continue to flow.

While the mid east takes a back seat to east-west relations, there is a good chance that Southern Africa may not be allowed on board at all. It is only Mr. Mulroney who feels passionately about this issue, and as host of the summit there are severe limits to the number of lonely personal demands he can impose on his reluctant guests. Moreover, there may be a case, on the grounds of long-term effectiveness, for practicing quiet rather than loud diplomacy against South Africa at this Summit. Writing down the western debt of black African states might be a more eloquent and effective statement of the democratic world's commitment to effectively combatting South African racism than another set of sanctions at this time.

This is particularly true because the powerhouse of the European Community, the West German government, is badly divided on the South African issue. Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher's Free Democrats are pushing for Canadian-like initiative while Franz-Joseph

Strauss' Bavarian-based Christian Socialist Union remain locked in the dogmas of decades past. The last thing Chancellor Kohl wants is a bold Summit statement to disrupt from abroad the considerable success he has secured at home, as a master of coalition politics, in inching the Federal Republic toward an enlightened stand against South African apartheid. Thus it could well be left to Brian Mulroney alone, in issuing the final summary as Summit host, to utter the bold words required to reassure struggling black southern Africans that their cause has not been forgotten by those who claim the leadership of the democratic world.

On the summiters expanded agenda, several issues are ripe for productive discussion. One is the global environment, with a particular focus on the looming problem of climate change. As on Summit environmental discussions in years past, the push for major movement will come from Canada and Germany, with the United States and Britain leading the resistance. But at Toronto the pro-environmentalists will have a new ally.

Italian Prime Minister De Mita, hard pressed at home by his Socialist coalition partners who successfully used the environmental issue in the last election, will be looking to the Toronto Summit as a chance to look good on this issue himself.

It is during the ninety-minute focus-on-the-future session at the University of Toronto that the leaders promise to show themselves at their innovative best. Here the major issues will be demography and education. Aging populations in most advanced industrial societies mean new challenges in the fields of budget policy, social programs, health care facilities, housing, pension plans and the like. And as the pace of scientific and technological advance and competition from new international competitors quickens, it will be necessary to continuously enrich and adapt the human capital that is already the major industrial countries strongest advantage. Whether a much intensified effort

in this area should be met by an entire new layer of publicly-funded education, or be offered to the private sector as an entrepreneurial challenge, is a question the leaders will want to consider.