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Statement of Senator Mike Mansfield (D. Mont.)
on the Summit Conference
May 16, 1960

Mr. President:

The news from Paris is discouraging, but I would remind my colleagues and my countrymen that this is a time not to give vent to our emotions but to remain calm in the face of the danger which confronts us. I have said this before. I will say it again.

The events of the past week, accentuated by the reports of today's Summit meeting should bring home to all -- to the Russians, to Americans, and to peoples everywhere -- a realization of how slender is the reed by which we cling to a civilized survival. That is the fact and it ought now to be visible to all. Yet this fact, this blazing fact, is in danger of being lost at Paris. National passions rise up on all sides to overwhelm it. The struggle of propaganda takes precedence over it. The Incident is not being appraised in terms of its deep implications for the present state of the world's tensions.

Let me say with all the seriousness that I possess, if this game goes on in its present vein -- this game of propaganda - counter-propaganda, this game of probe and counterprobe, this game of charge and counter-charge, this game of invite or not to invite -- there will indeed be a wreckage to study, a monumental wreckage. But it will be for some other generation, not this one, to study it. For the wreckage will be not just a plane. It will be the charred remnants of the civilization which houses living mankind.

That is the grim and fundamental reality which confronts the chiefs of state. There is no room at that meeting for displays of outraged indignation

on anyone's part. There is no room for propaganda-plays designed to bring to any nation the label of sole custodian of peace or the sole source of provocation to war.

At this critical juncture the four men who meet are in every sense the principal guardians of humanity's highest hopes -- perhaps of the human species itself. This may well be the decisive moment when the deadly game begins to end in the beginnings of a beginning of a durable peace, or drifts into the path of inevitable war. If they maintain that perspective these men will put aside and they will urge their peoples to put aside the dangerous provocations and the glib propaganda. They will see these provocations, this propaganda, for what they are, fragments embedded in the great wound which festers in mankind and threatens the very existence of civilization.

I would express the hope that President Eisenhower and Mr. Khrushchev would meet privately, lay their differences on the table, talk them out, and then, along with their colleagues, Prime Minister Macmillan and President de Gaulle, recognize the danger which faces civilization -- not just the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. -- and do their utmost to bring a modicum of peace and stability to all mankind.

The hopes of mankind are wrapped up in the deliberations of these four men. Let us pray that these hopes will not be treated lightly, but with the profound gravity to which they are entitled. It is not a question of saving face; it is a question of saving civilization.

COBY