

Inquiries of the Ministry

has there been any communication to the government of France from the Prime Minister in relation to this policy as it affects our armed forces in NATO?

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): There has been no discussion between the two governments as such, though the Secretary of State for External Affairs did see the French ambassador yesterday morning and discussed with him the observations made by President de Gaulle. Those observations of the day before yesterday were made at a press conference, and they develop the same view which the General has expressed in previous press conferences. However, an important new feature was an indication that after 1969 there would be a change in the command arrangements applying to foreign military elements on French territory.

All General de Gaulle's observations were, however, expressed in general terms, and we would expect that in due course the French government would make precise proposals to which Canada and other NATO governments would respond. At that time we could discuss within NATO any precise proposals which might be made. Such discussion would be inevitable in any event, because in the North Atlantic Treaty there is provision for a re-examination of the basis of the North Atlantic agreement after 20 years, and that 20 year period ends in 1969.

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, arising out of that question and the answer which has just been given, would the Prime Minister say what is the attitude of the Canadian government toward the suggestion attributed to General de Gaulle that in the first place the NATO mechanism is too rigid, too ponderous and too slow; and the General's view that troops on French soil would have to have French commanders? Can the Prime Minister give some indication of the view of the government on this, and also the suggestion attributed to the General that he would welcome a bilateral, direct alliance between France and the United States involving mutual assistance, defence and a "hot line" between Paris and Washington? Would the Prime Minister not say, in the light of the attitude reiterated by General de Gaulle, that the time has come for the fullest consideration to be given by the Atlantic countries to bringing about an Atlantic community?

Mr. Pearson: As far as the third question asked by the right hon. gentleman is concerned, I do not wish to comment on any

reported statement which may have been made about arrangements between Paris and Washington in respect of a special alliance. I have heard nothing about that.

As far as the first question is concerned, let me say that I think the NATO collective security arrangements since they were drawn up have been of great value in the preservation of the security and freedom of western Europe and the Atlantic community. I do also feel, however, as I am sure the right hon. gentleman does, having followed these developments, that at the end of a 20 year period it is a good thing to re-examine the coalition and perhaps make changes, if changes should be made, in order to make the coalition more effective.

As a matter of fact when the organization met here a year or so ago I myself made a statement to this effect, and the Canadian government had already instituted a re-examination of the alliance pending the end of the 20 year period. But I think the organization has been effective, and I hope we can make it more effective. It is a coalition which involves questions of collective security, and Canadian troops are in Europe as our contribution to this collective agreement. That is the only reason they are in Europe. They are not under national command nor would they be under national command in the future. They are there as part of the NATO arrangement, just as French, British and Norwegian troops would be in Canada if the NATO allies agreed that this should be done. That is why we are in Europe, and that is why we should remain in Europe.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I largely agree with the general concept advanced by the Prime Minister, but I come back to the question of the view of the Canadian government in answer to the suggestion by General de Gaulle to the effect that rather than improvement in NATO there may actually be disintegration if not complete dissolution. What is his answer to the earlier question? Though making this examination of NATO, desirable as it is, as a consequence of General de Gaulle's very strong and definitely truculent views having been expressed in this connection, what is the general attitude of the Prime Minister toward negotiations or discussions being commenced now to bring about an Atlantic union?

Mr. Pearson: Well, Mr. Speaker, I do not believe General de Gaulle meant his observations to be considered as either truculent or