

NATO Ministerial Meeting—Paris, December 1955

At the Ministerial meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Paris on December 15 and 16, the representatives of the fifteen member governments exchanged views on three basic questions:

- (a) the military problems of the alliance;
- (b) the international situation in the light of the Geneva Conferences;
- (c) the future development of the Atlantic community.

Canada was represented at the meeting by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. L. B. Pearson, the Minister of National Defence, Mr. Ralph Campney, the Minister of Finance, Mr. Walter Harris and the Canadian Permanent Representative to NATO, Mr. L. D. Wilgress. They were assisted by Mr. W. M. Benidickson, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Finance, and by officials of the Departments of External Affairs, National Defence, Finance and Defence Production.

Military Problems

The Council reaffirmed the basic strategic objectives of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and agreed on the measures necessary to adapt its forces to be prepared for a possible future war and on the general order of magnitude of these forces. In addition, principles to govern the development of defence planning, both collectively and nationally, were adopted; and consideration was given to the establishment of priorities for the defence programmes of individual member countries so as to achieve the most effective pattern of forces, given the resources in men, money and material likely to be available to the Alliance.

One specific problem to which the Council devoted some attention was the urgent need for an effective air defence and-warning system in Western Europe. It was decided that the Supreme Allied Commander Europe would be responsible for co-ordinating the air defence of NATO European countries, and the main outlines of the system to be developed by SACEUR were also approved.

Review of the International Situation

The members of the Council exchanged views on current political issues and, in particular, discussed recent Soviet non-military activities including their recent moves in the Middle East and Asia. As the Geneva Conference of Foreign Ministers had ended only a few weeks earlier, and as this was the first annual NATO meeting at which German representatives were present, it was natural that the German problem should be given special attention. Although there were, of course, differences of emphasis it was apparent that all members of the Council were in substantial agreement both in their assessments of Soviet policy and on the broad outlines of recent Western policy towards the Soviet Union.