

*NATO Foreign Ministers' Meeting*

Our two main preoccupations in Rome were, first, to urge that the alliance adopt a positive but realistic position on the subject of multilateral discussions, with emphasis on the substance of the issues at stake and, second, to have NATO make a firm offer to talk on balanced force reductions.

In both of these respects, the outcome of the meeting was very satisfactory to Canada. On the first point, the meeting agreed that "in so far as progress is recorded as a result of...ongoing discussions—in particular on Germany and Berlin—the allied governments...would be willing to enter into multilateral contacts with all interested governments. One of the main purposes...would be to explore when it would be possible to convene a conference...." This reasoned, step-by-step approach to the question of a conference is in line with our own thinking. The communiqué also refers to the possible establishment of a permanent body in due course, as one way of starting multilateral negotiations.

● (3:10 p.m.)

On our second point, NATO's declaration on balanced force reductions explicitly invites interested states to hold exploratory talks on the subject and suggests four specific considerations which the allies would put forward in such talks. The Italian Foreign Minister was asked to transmit the offer to the other side, and in fact has already done so.

I think members will agree that the positions adopted by the alliance in Rome represent a clear step forward in the search for better relations with the east. I was also struck by the mood of co-operation and willingness to compromise displayed by all at the meeting.

We shall watch carefully for evidence that the other side is willing to respond positively. Early results may not be forthcoming, but in the months ahead Canada and other members of the Alliance will be exploring actively the prospects both for an eventual conference and for talks on balanced force reductions, so that the momentum which has now been developed is maintained.

While in Rome I called for the first time on the Secretary of State of the Vatican.

From Rome I went to Belgrade and then to Bucharest at the invitation of the Yugoslav and Roumanian governments. In Roumania, I flew over some of the flooded areas and was able to see for myself the desolation caused by the tragic national disaster that has taken

[Mr. Sharp.]

place there, and to appreciate what it means in terms of human suffering and as a major setback to the Roumanian economy. On the way home I paid a brief official visit to Dublin.

In each case I had talks with the President, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister on a wide range of bilateral and international questions including the results of the NATO ministerial meeting. I should like to table the communiqués issued on my visits to Belgrade and Bucharest. In Dublin the talks were less formal and no communiqué was issued.

**Mr. R. Gordon L. Fairweather (Fundy-Royal):** Mr. Speaker, the minister was kind enough to make a copy of his statement available, and I thank him for this courtesy. I must tell him that we have had a somewhat difficult time keeping track of his progression across Europe.

We were alarmed, falsely as it turned out, by the implications of France's alleged refusal to grant overfly privileges for the minister, only to be very much relieved by the Prime Minister's assurance that it was all a canard. No sooner had we checked our dictionaries to enable us to understand that word than we were having to respond to the minister's offer of a Canadian peacekeeping force for the Middle East. This generosity sent us scurrying to the military experts to see, if the Canadian offer were taken up, whether enough troops would be left in Canada to enable us to assert our northern sovereignty or, as a matter of fact, any other sovereignty that the government has in mind to assert. When the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Cadieux) was asked about the offer, he did not say it was a canard. He simply said he did not know anything more about the offer than I did. Perhaps we will learn a little more about this generosity as the week progresses, but I would like to submit to the minister that peacekeeping, of course, is a useful role for Canada provided the Security Council is able to establish clear and unambiguous ground rules for its operation.

The NATO ministerial meetings in Rome took place amidst ongoing initiatives—the Soviet and United States talks on strategic arms limitation, the Geneva disarmament conference, the initiatives in Berlin and by the Federal Republic of Germany, the proposal for Warsaw Pact-NATO meetings and the possibility, as the minister explained to us, of mutual force reductions. Personally, I think the minister is correct in hesitating about institutionalizing, by way of a commission,