

I have just returned from the meeting of NATO Foreign Ministers in the capital of the Federal Republic of Germany -- situated at the crossroads of Europe. In terms of time, too, the Bonn meeting took place at a crossroads in the evolution of East-West relations.

The NATO meeting coincided with the completion of President Nixon's talks with Soviet leaders. Secretary of State Rogers reported to his colleagues in Bonn on this historic visit and in particular on the strategic arms limitation agreements. We all welcomed these agreements as an important turning point in efforts to curb the nuclear arms race and enhance international security through nuclear arms control. Along with other Ministers, I welcomed the commitment of the United States and the Soviet Union actively to continue negotiations on further limitations. I also expressed particular appreciation to the United States for having regularly consulted its allies in the North Atlantic Council throughout the negotiating process.

On June 3 shortly after the NATO meeting the Foreign Ministers of the Four Powers signed a final protocol bringing the Berlin Agreement into force. At the same time representatives of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Soviet Union and Poland exchanged instruments of ratification concluding their non-aggression treaties. The Canadian Government welcomes these agreements as major steps forward in relations between East and West. The Berlin Agreement hopefully marks the end of the recurring tension and instability in and around Berlin that have frequently envenomed East-West relations since the blockade in 1948. The non-aggression treaties should remove another source of tension, allowing the FRG to put its relations with Eastern Europe on a more normal basis.

Together these developments open the way for the Alliance to take part in multilateral preparatory talks on a Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe and for the two German states to begin negotiations on a modus vivendi. Such an accommodation is necessary for the success of the Berlin agreement and for the maintenance of stability in Central Europe. If the two German states can agree on a modus vivendi it will pave the way for their entry into the United Nations and a general recognition of the GDR.

When one looks back at the many years of stagnant East-West relations, the conclusion of the Berlin agreement and the non-aggression treaties represents remarkable progress. It vindicates the Alliance's policy of making a Berlin settlement the pre-condition for progress on preparation for a conference and demonstrates that the Alliance, through its solid support for Chancellor Brandt's "ostpolitik" is a positive instrument for détente.