

During General Eisenhower's visit to that country, he was given a strong advocacy of Spanish membership in NATO by Prime Minister Salazar. Mr. Ritchie formed the impression during a conversation on February 5, 1951, with the United States Minister in Ottawa that the Supreme Command had been "considerably impressed". When this was reported to Mr. Pearson, he commented that he did not think anything should be done without very careful diplomatic preparation, and in any event not until after the French elections. The last observation was prompted by remarks from Prime Minister Plevin during his visit to Ottawa. Mr. Wilgress was informed of these developments, with the suggestion that Spain might be made a topic for discussion by the Deputies as one way of heading off the danger of it being raised in more abrupt fashion by Washington, as the French Prime Minister feared. He was not to take any official initiative, but might find a way of suggesting it privately to his NATO colleagues. Mr. Wilgress replied that he thought it would serve no useful purpose at the present time, since it might reveal wide differences of view, and also "might serve to disclose the main preoccupation of the United States military, which would have a disastrous effect on the morale of the Western European countries". On February 19, three days after this telegram, the Counsellor of the U.S. Embassy asked an officer of the Department what the Canadian reaction would be to association of Spain with NATO either formally or informally, or to some bilateral arrangement between the United States and Spain, or to the inclusion of Spain in the European Army scheme. He was given a cautious reply which repeated the views expressed by Mr. St. Laurent and emphasized the difficulties of the situation for European countries. Mr. Morgan said that the United States realized the controversial nature of the problem and the need for its careful handling. The State Department did not incline towards a bilateral treaty and had no intention of making any arrangements with Spain without previously informing its NATO partners. At the time Mr. Morgan called, Mr. Acheson had already told Congress that he hoped Spain could be "linked with Atlantic Defence plans". It was also learned from London that the new United States Ambassador to Spain had been instructed to carry on "exploratory conversations" with the Spanish Government on that question. This development impelled the United Kingdom to inform the State Department that such discussions at the present time might have "most unfortunate repercussions". They had asked the United States to suspend conversations until there was a clarification of the military objectives which the United States desired.

134. All of these developments were summarized in a memorandum for the Minister, who commented that he would prefer the question discussed by exchanges of views between the countries more directly concerned than at NATO meetings. It was felt that Canada's main concern was to have the problem of Spain "discussed in such a manner that it does not poison relations between NATO members". Accordingly, our Ambassadors in Washington and Paris and our High Commissioner in London were so informed, all three being asked to make Canada's views known at a suitable opportunity. From Washington came the news, at the end of March, that the exploratory conversation between the U.S. Ambassador in Madrid and Franco had indicated that, under present conditions, the best solution for Spanish security might be a defence agreement among the United States, Spain, and Portugal. Given adequate military assistance by the United States, Spain would be willing to enter an agreement with exactly the same obligations as if Spain were in NATO and, properly armed, Spain "would, under any and all circumstances, be prepared to send troops to fight beyond the Pyrenees, even if there were no defence agreement". The State Department believed it was premature to raise the question of NATO membership. By June, the question had been made more difficult by