

Crisis in Cuba

We must ensure that the momentum toward peace generated by this close brush with war is not lost in the days ahead.

Issues have been raised in the correspondence between the president and the chairman which properly belong in the disarmament field. The government feels that the machinery exists at Geneva to pursue these topics, and that the 18 nation disarmament conference should be reconvened with the least possible delay, their responsibility being to address themselves to these problems which, though not new in themselves, may have been given new possibility of solution over the week end.

Out of all this has come a step forward that few could have expected a week ago, and that is in the acceptance by the U.S.S.R. of the principle of inspection and verification. If the present settlement is fully accepted this will be the first time that agreed measures of disarmament are to be carried out under international inspection. This gives hope in the general field of disarmament, where up to the present time the Soviets have demanded that all international agreements for disarmament should be free from inspection, a course of action which would be dangerous in the utmost to the free world.

Hon. L. B. Pearson (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I think, in fact I know, that all members of the house, as indeed all people of good will everywhere, will share the Prime Minister's relief at what seems to be the end of the immediate crisis in Cuba. Our relief will be all the greater because of the magnitude of the possible disaster if events had taken a different course. I think, Mr. Speaker, our relief and satisfaction is bound to be increased by the nature of the recent correspondence between the leaders of the two super powers who between them, with their governments and their peoples, have within their control this great issue of peace and war.

I am glad that the Prime Minister was able to remove one possible source of anxiety, some ambiguity in the Soviet position in regard to relating the situation in Cuba to the situation of the United States NATO bases in Turkey. This latter is something which no doubt can be considered on its merits. I think we were worried at the time that the position taken by the Soviet union might link these problems in a way which would prevent the solution of either.

As the Prime Minister has said, Mr. Speaker, we should keep our relief, as indeed it was necessary to keep our fears, in perspective and try to avoid excessive optimism or excessive pessimism. While we may profoundly hope,

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

and we all do, that this particular crisis which appeared to take us to the very brink of what would have been nuclear war, has been solved, there are other danger points which could easily become crises. The Prime Minister has mentioned one which is very much in our minds, and that is the position in Berlin.

There is, of course, an interconnection in the present circumstances of global cold war, between one danger point and another. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, if what we hope is a settlement of the Cuban crisis can lead to the reduction of tensions elsewhere, and especially to progress in the field of disarmament, then we can indeed be grateful to the President of the United States for the stand taken last week.

There is something else which was mentioned by the Prime Minister yesterday and which certainly should be avoided, that is the tendency to claim a victory for one side against the other. The only victory that we want in a situation of this kind, is the victory of peace with that freedom without which peace would not mean very much. Mr. Khrushchev's statement of yesterday, which was characterized by the President of the United States as an important and constructive contribution to peace, does open the door to further negotiations. I agree with the Prime Minister that it is surely now the purpose of statesmanship to exploit this opportunity to the full with persistence, with patience and with hope, but without any illusions and with the realization that solutions will not be easy or quick to find.

If, however, we can take advantage of this crisis, as was said in this house last week, in order to make progress in the solution of other problems, then indeed we will have made progress. In this situation, Mr. Speaker, surely the Atlantic coalition, NATO, must hold together with maximum unity. I would hope, and the events of this last week have underlined the importance of this, that the NATO council on the highest possible political level, will be able to go into almost continuous consultation as the western world seeks a means of continuing the progress which has begun by the hoped-for solution of the Cuban crisis.

I should like also, before I sit down, to echo what the Prime Minister has said about the indispensability of the United Nations, proven once again by the events of last week. The United Nations cannot itself impose a solution when any great power is opposed to that solution, but the United Nations, as has been shown once again, can provide the machinery through which a solution can be found, and provide a road along which the