

External Affairs in Parliament

STATEMENTS OF GOVERNMENT POLICY

The purpose of this section is to provide a selection of statements on external affairs, by Ministers of the Crown or by their parliamentary assistants. It is not designed to provide a complete coverage of debates on external affairs taking place during the month.

At meetings of the Standing Committee on External Affairs during the current session of Parliament, the Secretary of State for External Affairs reviewed recent developments in international affairs. Given below are reports of Mr. Pearson's comments on the Ministerial Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Paris last May; the situation in Formosa and the Islands of Quemoy and Matsu; the recent developments in Indochina, and the work of the International Supervisory Commissions in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

REPORT ON NATO

Reporting on the two-day session of the North Atlantic Council in Paris early in May, the Secretary of State for External Affairs stated that in his opinion the importance of these ministerial meetings, from the point of view of consultation, had increased. The Ministers had not only discussed a prepared agenda in formal meetings, but also had had an opportunity to discuss recent developments informally between meetings. These informal discussions were often as important as the more formal ones.

The Minister reported that the agenda which had been drawn up for this meeting, although a short one, covered a considerable range of topics. The first item was discussed under the following headings: "trends and implications of Soviet policy including the political and economic penetration of underdeveloped countries;" political and economic questions arising from current Soviet tactics"; and other matters of common concern in the international situation".

The first item consisted primarily of an analysis by the Foreign Ministers of the change in tactics of the Soviet Union and the new conditions brought about by "competitive co-existence". The Ministers had discussed the effect that these new developments would have on the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in particular, and on international relations in general. While it had been generally recognized that Russian tactics had changed significantly, the Ministers had agreed that it would be premature and unwise to come to any dogmatic conclusions with regard to the long-range significance of these changes. Some members of the Council had been inclined to attach greater importance than others to the shift in Soviet tactics. There was also general agreement that, whatever the immediate significance might be, it should not result in any lessening of effort on the part of NATO, and that the need for maintaining adequate defences remained no matter what happened in Moscow or what might be likely to happen there. It was still a primary objective of NATO to resist any weakening of its defensive strength, although efforts would be made to adapt the Alliance to changed conditions.