

Of course if there had been a different attitude taken by the Communist representatives on the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission and by the Communist side in Korea it would have been, I think, quite possible, almost easy, to have arranged for the examination of these prisoners in the time allotted for it, ninety days. It was understood by those who took part in these negotiations that the ninety days meant ninety consecutive days. However, after the first examinations took place, and when it was clear to the world that the great majority of the prisoners would rather go back to captivity than to go home under Communist rule, this was such a terrific blow to the prestige of communism in the Far East that the Communists themselves from that time forward did everything they could to prevent further examination. That seems to me to be a simple and pretty obvious explanation of why the examination of prisoners broke down before the end of the ninety-day period.

Excerpt from a Statement by the Secretary of State for External Affairs in the House of Commons, March 25, 1954. House of Commons Debates, pages 3326 - 3327:

The other item on the Berlin agenda which was dealt with has resulted, as the house knows, in the calling of the Geneva conference. I believe this conference can be welcomed. But again, we should have no exaggerated hopes of success. We must, of course, do our best to bring about that success. We must refuse to give up the struggle if we seem to be having difficulty in the first week or two. But it is not going to be an easy conference, and indeed it is not going to be a conference from which we can be sure of constructive results. For one thing, we shall have new membership at that conference in the personnel of the delegation from Communist China.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations, whom we were happy to welcome in Ottawa only a few weeks ago, had this to say in London at a dinner on March 18:

"Now, we are facing a new chapter in the Korean story. Next month in Geneva the nations who fought under the United Nations flag in Korea return to the conference table to seek peace. At this table the communist countries will be fully represented for the first time. The negotiations that will be undertaken in Geneva will be of extreme difficulty, yet it would be a serious mistake to allow them to lapse again should it prove impossible quickly to conclude that peace treaty."

He concluded this part of his remarks in these words:

"It is inherent in the United Nations' approach that the western world and the communist world meet regularly around the conference table."

I was asked on Tuesday by the hon. member for Eglinton (Mr. Fleming) what would be our instructions as a Canadian delegation at this conference. Mr. Speaker, that can be stated in very general terms. We shall do our best to assist in the process of converting the Korean armistice, a somewhat uneasy Korean armistice, into a durable and satisfactory peace within the United Nations frame of reference which has been set down for this conference and by which we, as a government, indeed as a parliament, are bound.