

the framework of the United Nations Charter. I think we can express a hope for some good results from this meeting, but we should not expect too much from it.

From even this cursory survey of European affairs it is clear that there are still numerous obstacles to be overcome before the security and prosperity of the free nations of the Atlantic community can be insured. However, I think there has been a significant advance from the fear and instability of the immediate post-war period, and for that I suggest we ought to be grateful to NATO.

NATO's work, which I think has been pretty effective in this regard, is far from finished. Indeed it is just getting under way. It has taken time for the decisions taken and the plans approved to bear fruit, and their full impact has only recently begun to be felt. For the majority of NATO countries the proportion of the total output of their economy devoted to defence is only now reaching its peak. According to General Gruenther, the present supreme commander in Europe of NATO forces, the forces under his command have approximately doubled since 1951, and the gain in their effectiveness, in their modernization and in their fighting efficiency is greater still. These NATO forces are now strong enough to make an aggressor think twice before taking them on.

But the Soviet and satellite forces are also being steadily increased in numbers and in effectiveness. That is why it is still important for the West not only to add a German contribution to the existing NATO strength but also to improve further NATO forces in equipment and in quality so that if the worst emergency should happen, these forces could act as a shield behind which the full strength of the member countries could rapidly be mobilized.

To complete this very short review of the work of NATO I should refer, if only for a moment, to the ministerial meeting of the Council which was held in Paris in December last. I attended that meeting with my colleague, the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Claxton), and with our permanent representative to the Council, Mr. Wilgress. I think the most significant discussions which took place in Paris at that time were those relating to the international situation as it affected the various NATO countries and with the question of future NATO defence planning.

At these discussions the members of the council spoke their minds very frankly and freely. I think by doing so we brought about a better understanding between the various countries, even though, at times there was a difference between us on some things.

It was agreed at this council meeting that the NATO countries would continue to seek three basic objectives. First, not to let down our guard. Second, to promote at the same time our economic and social development and to strengthen our political unity. Third, to seek to negotiate with the Soviet Union on outstanding differences whenever and wherever possible.

The broad lines of future NATO defence planning to meet the threat of aggression over an extended period were agreed to in Paris in December. Member countries