

Inquiries of the Ministry

expenses might arise from the European security conference in respect of NATO obligations and this sort of thing. Has the right hon. member any indication that the U.S.S.R. is prepared to discuss at a European security conference a reduction in military expenditures, a reduction of troops, or simply a reduction of troops in that area of Europe, in other words, a withdrawal of troops rather than a reduction?

• (2:40 p.m.)

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): It is in order to get an answer to this type of question that the NATO countries have encouraged our discussions with the Soviet Union and are conducting some themselves, and that, indeed, the NATO countries have named an explorer to try to find the answer to that type of question.

Mr. Stanfield: I should like to ask the right hon. gentleman whether there has been a change in the position of the U.S.S.R. during the past year? I ask this in view of the fact it was clearly indicated to me when I was in the Soviet Union that what was involved was a withdrawal and that the U.S.S.R. could discuss an actual reduction of troops only in a global context rather than in the context of European security. Has there been a change in the position of the U.S.S.R. in that regard?

Mr. Trudeau: Well, Mr. Speaker, perhaps as a result of the trip of the Leader of the Opposition to that country there has been some advance in the Soviet position—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Trudeau: If the Leader of the Opposition does not wish to take credit for it, that is fine, but we think they have moved since he last saw them.

Mr. Stanfield: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, it is all very well for the Prime Minister to be smart. I am simply seeking information on a point of great importance to this country. I asked him whether there had been a change in the position, as would have been indicated by the Prime Minister's response to my question initially. I do not think that calls for any smart-aleck remarks by the right hon. gentleman.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

PROPOSED EUROPEAN SECURITY CONFERENCE—SOVIET
POSITION ON CAREFUL PREPARATION AND
AGREED-UPON AGENDA

Mr. David Lewis (York South): I have a supplementary question for the Prime Minister. In view of the fact that one of the differences between the Soviet Union and the NATO countries with regard to a European security conference has been the insistence of the NATO countries that there be a carefully prepared agenda and so on before a conference is called, does the statement in the communiqué that both sides declare themselves in favour of a properly prepared conference on security and cooperation in Europe mean that the Soviet Union has now come closer to the NATO position that the conference must be carefully prepared and an agenda agreed upon before it is held?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): I would venture to answer in the affirmative. There has already been a very serious advance by the Soviet side in that they have concluded negotiations with the Federal Republic of Germany. We think this is a clear indication that they are prepared to go some distance to follow up statements made last May, I believe, by Mr. Brezhnev, that they were looking for a detente in Europe and heeding the opinions which have been given by Canada and other NATO countries that there would have to be progress on the Berlin question before we could fruitfully sit down to discuss European security generally. In that sense there has certainly been some movement on the part of the Soviet Union since the Leader of the Opposition last went there.

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): While discussions are going on concerning certain reductions in armed forces—infantry, artillery and the like—did the Russian premier mention the fact that the U.S.S.R. today has the largest fleet on earth, including 340 submarines, that it controls ingress to and egress from the Mediterranean—

Some hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Diefenbaker: What did he say he intended to do concerning the reduction of naval forces, particularly in the Atlantic, and especially in the number of Russian submarines which are parading through the north Atlantic and the south Atlantic as well? After all, he has protested a desire for peace. What did he say about these things?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, there is no way to get an answer out of this government. The Prime Minister has no right to deal with Parliament as he sought to do with the Leader of the Opposition a moment ago.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. The arrogance of this government—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Diefenbaker: —in refusing to give answers while protesting itself to be in favour of peace, yet allowing Kosygin to fool them in the way they have been fooled in the last few days, is something that should shock Canadians as a whole.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I suggest to hon. members that this is debate rather than privilege. I would hope that in the last two minutes remaining before the end of the question period we might contrive to get two or three more questions dealt with.