



Bulletin

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MR. SHARP REPORTS ON NATO MEETING

On June 8, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. Mitchell Sharp, tabled in the House of Commons the communiqué and declaration issued at the end of the NATO foreign ministers' meeting he had just attended in Rome.

After his stay in Italy, Mr. Sharp visited Yugoslavia, Romania and Ireland. He reported to the House as follows on the NATO meeting and his subsequent travels:

Discussions are already under way between various NATO members and individual Soviet bloc countries on such important East-West problems as the limitation of strategic arms, Berlin, and the Federal German Republic's relations with its Eastern neighbours. At Rome, NATO ministers met to discuss what further steps the alliance and its members should take to promote improvement in East-West relations.

One possibility examined at Rome was the idea of a move in the direction of broader multilateral discussions, either in the form of a large conference or series of conferences, or a standing commission on East-West problems. Canada took the position that

the idea of a conference at the right time and in the right circumstances would be most useful. We felt, however, that the actual decision to convene such a meeting should not be taken until an East-West consensus had emerged on the aims of a conference and on the subjects which could usefully be discussed, and until a conference had reasonable prospects of success. Similarly, we saw merit in the idea of setting up a standing commission, although we thought that the time was probably not yet right for it. It is our view that progress in the individual East-West talks which I mentioned a moment ago would be a good yardstick for determining when the time had come to broaden discussions out into a general multilateral forum. We must keep in mind the primary importance of moving ahead on the substance of outstanding issues.

GUIDELINES FOR FORCE REDUCTIONS

Canada placed emphasis at Rome on the desirability of broadening the range of specific subjects under discussion with the other side. In 1968 and 1969, NATO had already indicated its interest in the possibility of mutual and balanced force reductions in central Europe but as yet there has been no formal Soviet response. At Rome, Canada urged NATO to go beyond its previous position and make a clear and forthright offer to explore with the members of the Warsaw Pact how to start negotiations on force reductions. To demonstrate the seriousness of NATO's approach, we said that the alliance's offer should include suggested guidelines for the reductions, and a precise procedure for communications with the other side. A forthcoming, explicit offer of this kind would, in our view, have the best chance of obtaining a positive reply.

Our two main preoccupations in Rome were, first, to urge that the alliance adopt a positive but realistic position on the subject of multilateral discussions, with emphasis on the substance of the issues at stake and, second, to have NATO make a firm offer to talk on balanced force reductions.

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