

NATO Ministerial Meeting, December 1959

THE 1959 annual meeting of the foreign, defence and finance ministers of the fifteen member nations of the North Atlantic Alliance convened in Paris from December 15 to 17, and again on December 22, following a meeting of the Heads of Government of the United States, the United Kingdom, France and the Federal Republic of Germany that was concerned mainly with arrangements for the proposed East-West summit conference. In addition, the foreign ministers of Canada, France, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States met on December 21 to discuss the convening of the Committee of Ten on Disarmament. Because of its special relationship to the Heads-of-Government Meeting and the ministerial discussions on disarmament, the NATO sessions were consequently concerned not only with the traditional review of the international situation and current NATO defence problems but also with matters relating to the forthcoming East-West summit negotiations and preparations for negotiations on disarmament, both in the Ten-Nation Disarmament Committee and "at the summit".

The meetings were held in the spacious new NATO Headquarters building overlooking the Bois du Bologne. Canada was represented by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. Green; the Minister of Finance, Mr. Fleming; the Minister of National Defence, Mr. Pearkes; Canada's Permanent Representative to the North Atlantic Council, Mr. Léger; the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. Robertson; the Chairman, Chiefs of Staff, General Foulkes; and officials from the Departments of External Affairs, Finance and National Defence.

The first three days of the meeting were devoted to a review of the international situation, defence problems and the forthcoming negotiations between East and West at the summit. Special attention was directed to the current Soviet approach to international questions and hope was expressed that the forthcoming negotiations with the Soviet Union would advance a solution on outstanding problems. In examining the military situation, ministers took note of the fact that Soviet military strength continued to grow and concluded that NATO defence plans remained valid. On the basis of the progress already achieved and the favourable economic situation in most NATO countries, ministers agreed that the effort required to guarantee the necessary strength of the Alliance was within the ability of NATO as a whole. Looking ahead, ministers instructed the Permanent Council to undertake long-term planning on the objectives of the Alliance in the political, military, scientific and economic fields and in regard to arms control. (Text of the communiqué issued at the conclusion of the first three days of the meeting is attached as Annex A.)

The resumed session of the meeting on December 22 dealt mainly with the reports of the four Heads of State on preparations for the East-West summit