

NATO Ministerial Meeting

At the ministerial meeting of the North Atlantic Council, held in Paris from December 11 to December 14, 1956, Canada was represented by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. L. B. Pearson, and the Minister of National Defence, Mr. Ralph Campney. The Canadian Ministers were assisted by the Permanent Representative of Canada to the North Atlantic Council, Mr. L. D. Wilgress, by the Chairman, Chiefs of Staff, General Charles Foulkes, and by officers of the Permanent Delegation in Paris and of the Departments of External Affairs, National Defence, Finance and Defence Production.

It had been anticipated that this December meeting would be of special importance because:

- a) It was fairly generally held that international developments since the death of Stalin had reduced, though not removed, the threat of all-out military aggression. While these changes had not diminished the need for collective military defence, NATO had to determine whether and how they should be reflected in its strategic military planning.
- b) Events in the Middle East had among other things obviously affected the consultative process between the three major powers of the Alliance, whose co-operation is essential to the maintenance of that superior military strength which is one of the main justifications of NATO.
- c) Finally, the Council had just received the report prepared by the Committee of Three Ministers which it had appointed in May 1956 to advise on ways and means to improve and extend NATO co-operation in non-military fields.

Military Questions

As they normally do at the end of each year, the Ministers first surveyed the military capabilities of the Alliance, and assessed the progress achieved during 1956. The situation was found generally encouraging, and the Council noted with particular approval the efforts made by NATO military authorities to provide NATO forces with new modern weapons.

The most important step taken by the Council in the military field was the approval of a directive for future military planning which would take into account NATO's most recent estimates of Soviet intentions and capabilities, and the various types of new weapons available for NATO defence. This directive does not in fact call for any fundamental change in the NATO strategic concept. It re-affirmed that NATO, a defensive Alliance, should have sufficient land forces in Europe to act as a shield against any sudden aggression, adequate air and naval forces to retaliate against the aggressor, nuclear weapons for use in the event of overt Soviet military aggression, and the ability to deal locally with situations short of all-out war such as infiltrations, incursions and limited hostile actions.