

NATO Ministerial Meeting

be a study of the state of the alliance and the commonly accepted purposes and principles of NATO, to be undertaken in the first instance by the permanent council. I am pleased to be able to report that this view finds clear expression in paragraph 4 of the communiqué.

We believe the unity of the alliance is best served by using to the fullest possible extent the machinery of consultation which NATO provides. It was with this aim in view that, as I have just mentioned, we advocated a full and continuous examination of the state of the alliance and of its purposes and objectives.

I cannot recall a more searching discussion at any of these meetings. We did not evade the problems of the alliance, even the United States and British proposals for multilateral defence arrangements. We heard and welcomed in unmistakable terms assurances of mutual confidence and co-operation based on a unanimous recognition of the fact that at least as long as the threat of aggression in a divided Europe continues, the need for the alliance remains as compelling as ever.

While NATO has survived successive crises, I hasten to add that I found no state of crisis in the alliance but a healthy recognition of the perplexing problems of the international scene and a desire to come to grips with them.

I had talks with the French foreign minister which were part of a series in the ministerial consultations between Canada and France begun last January at the time the Prime Minister and I visited General de Gaulle and members of the French government. I had an extensive conversation in this connection on December 13 with Mr. Couve de Murville at the Quai d'Orsay. The French foreign minister and I exchanged views on a number of NATO issues and reviewed several subjects of current interest to both our countries, including defence.

Finally, I took the opportunity on December 14 to attend the opening of the new consulate general of Canada at Bordeaux. This marks a further significant stage in the rapidly broadening relations between France and Canada.

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Leader of the Opposition): First I want to say to the minister that he has given to the house a general review, but he has not touched on certain matters which I would have thought he would deal with.

When he speaks of the necessity of preserving the NATO alliance, that sentiment would, of course, receive the entire support

of the members of this house. The hon. gentleman stated that the NATO alliance showed no sign of weakening. That is not the information which is daily being received through the press, over the radio and through other media of information. Indeed, for the past several months these sources have indicated a loosening of those ties in NATO.

One of the main purposes of the meeting, I would think, would have been to bring about a more general agreement in respect to those things which are essential to the preservation and strengthening of NATO. It has always been the case that an alliance defensive in its nature weakens when the threat of danger lessens. Certainly in the last year, in any event, the communist threat as posed by the U.S.S.R. has, in the public mind, diminished and in consequence those things that hold the nations together in NATO tend to weaken.

The minister had advised the house that Canada will be receiving an invitation today from the secretary general to provide for a further three months of peace keeping in Cyprus, and he has informed the house that the stand of the government will be the acceptance of the request. I would have liked to hear the minister place before the house and the country the representations he made regarding the most unfair responsibility which rests on Canada of providing the entire cost of Canada's contribution to that peace force. Why should Canada be placed in the position of having to bear the entire cost of doing an international work? We have spoken of this on more than one occasion. Apparently, however, the minister did not deal therewith or place before the NATO countries the need of a reasonable degree of equality of sacrifice among the nations in the preservation of the UN force and the maintenance of that peace force.

On the question of the nuclear deterrent we received little or no information from the minister. I can understand his difficulty, because this government in its policy in this regard has followed a course of uncertainty and vacillation. We have seen evidence of that over and over again in the last 19 months, namely that the views expressed by the members of the present government, when they were in opposition, regarding a nuclear deterrent and the like have been forgotten or in any event denuded in the experience of carrying them into effect.

Then there was reported in the press a statement made by the minister regarding