

No. 58/2

REPORT ON NATO CONFERENCE, PARIS.

by

Prime Minister John G. Diefenbaker as prepared
for Radio and Television Broadcast on December
22, 1957.

My fellow Canadians.....once again I thank you for granting me these few minutes of your time to bring you the Season's Greetings, and to say a few words about the NATO Conference in Paris, from which I have just returned. This is the season when the thoughts of men and women of goodwill everywhere return to the eternal hope of peace on earth in our time. For that reason I am happy to report that the Conference was, in every sense of the word, a PEACE Conference and I believe that substantial and lasting progress was made towards that most important of all objectives of the free nations of the world.

Mes chers concitoyens ... une fois de plus je vous remercie de m'accorder ces quelques minutes de votre temps pour vous adresser mes meilleurs voeux de Noël et pour vous dire quelques mots au sujet de la conférence de l'OTAN à laquelle je viens d'assister à Paris. Nous sommes au temps de l'année, ou, partout, les hommes et les femmes de bonne volonté nourrissent plus que jamais l'espoir éternel de la paix sur terre à notre époque. Aussi suis-je heureux de pouvoir vous dire, au début de ces quelques remarques, que la conférence a été, vraiment, une conférence de la PAIX; je crois que nous avons progressé de façon sensible et durable vers la paix, le plus important de tous les objectifs des nations libres du monde.

It was, I think a happy coincidence that the Conference was held just before Christmas. The spirit of the blessed season was constantly with us, even as we discussed those grim realities which still stand between the Free World and lasting peace.

I am sure that the basic facts of the Paris Meeting are well known to most of you but I would like to emphasize a few aspects which may have escaped you in these busy days.

I should say at once that not since the Versailles Conference of thirty-eight years ago have the heads of so many states sat down together to plan for peace. The fifteen nations who comprise the North Atlantic Treaty Organization were represented by their leaders - an indication in itself of the determination of the free democracies of the world to join hands and hearts in the common cause of world humanity.

NATO is a defensive alliance of free nations who seek not only to preserve peace but also to maintain freedom. The objectives of our nations is a world in which both will be assured to all men. NATO's objective is not Peace at any cost, but Freedom at any cost, except at the cost of Freedom itself.

There was no room for doubt in the minds of those of us who sat around the Conference table in Paris that peace in the world today depends on preparedness to meet the threat of war tomorrow. We who cherish freedom must be ready to defend it at any

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moment. On the military level this is the only sure guarantee of peace. It is, therefore, the duty of the free nations of the NATO and other alliances to make clear to all not only the folly but also the futility of sudden aggression. Many of us have lived through two terrible world wars, and looking back, almost the only thing about them that seems certain is that neither would have been started had the aggressors known the real strength and will to resist of those they sought to conquer and enslave. Our Free World has, therefore, a very real obligation to make its strength known. That, I believe, is the answer to those who may have wondered at the emphasis placed on military might at a Conference whose purpose was permanent peace.

And having said that, I hasten to add that there came to all of us at that Conference, as perhaps never before in history, the realization that more military and missile strength is not enough. It is for that reason that, in the long view, the most important achievements of the Conference were in the strengthening of our mutual defences on our common spiritual, economic and scientific fronts. In these fields, I feel certain we made good progress. We reached a wide degree of mutual understanding and decisions were arrived at which will result in an all-round strengthening of the ties which bind us together for peace.

The problems which face our countries are very great but I can say to you that there are no grounds for despair. NATO is an alliance of some four hundred and fifty million people. It extends across three continents. It joins hand with other alliances of freedom-loving peoples to ring the globe with a band of hope and determination that those among mankind who love peace and freedom will prevail as against those who would plunge us once more into war in a vain-glorious attempt at world domination.

What were the immediate fruits of the Paris Conference? It assured a unified and revived alliance which is going to stand together and to stand fast.

It made clear that the alliance is defensive in that it will, in strength, prevent the launching of war against any of us. NATO is aggressive only for Peace.

The Conference made clear that we not only seek peace, but we pursue it, and that each of our nations is anxious and desirous of bringing about disarmament of both nuclear and conventional weapons and armed forces.

There was complete agreement in our dedication not to win the next war, but to prevent it.

While the Kremlin has repeatedly avowed its desire for disarmament it has consistently refused to agree to any form of inspection or control, so as to assure that the pledged word of each of the nations to disarm will be kept.

The Free Nations want to bring about a reduction in tension. To that end the members of the alliance opened the door to the U.S.S.R. if it really desires to negotiate to bring about a halt to the armament race. But the reaction to this open and sincerely expressed willingness was not made very hopeful yesterday by the Soviet leaders who, instead of agreeing to a meeting of Foreign Ministers, suggested a special session of the United Nations on disarmament. That this suggestion by the Soviet is another stall for time would seem to be a reasonable

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ground to take since within the last few weeks the U.S.S.R. has refused to have anything to do with the Disarmament Committee of the Five Nations, and has given notice that it will not participate in the deliberations in the United Nations Committee of 25 on Disarmament which is to commence its deliberations early in the New Year.

I still express the hope that the leaders of the U.S.S.R. will try to meet us half way and face this dreadful problem of continually mounting armaments instead of continuing in the future as in the past to do everything to throw road blocks in the way of a fair and reasonable agreement on disarmament.

The Conference left no doubt that its member nations will continue to stand together and to stand fast. I believe that our alliance, (far from showing signs of disintegration as our enemies hoped it would) has become stronger, more efficient, and more realistic to meet any threat which could or would be brought against it, and will strive more than ever before to bring about Peace in this troubled world.

We have put our house in order against any who may come in the night to destroy us. But we have not latched the door against anyone who may come seeking peace. To such the door is open.

At this season of the year - and indeed throughout the year -- we think of the captive peoples who have been held down in tyranny in the Ukraine, Hungary, Poland, East Germany and the Baltic States, and in other parts of Europe. I felt that a message should be given to them from the Conference, and my suggestion was accepted.

I am not going to read the section of the declaration, but its effect will be to let these captive peoples know that we realize their sacrifices, and that their heroism has not been forgotten. We have let them know that their plight will not be forgotten - and that in the fullness of time our hope is that they, and free men everywhere, will once again be free to live their lives as they will.

I feel sure that you will want me to tell you, as your representative at these talks, that I found on all sides the greatest good will for Canada. I am sure that it is the wish of all the other countries that we continue to take a leading role in the councils of NATO. I am able to report to you, as a simple statement of fact, that the voice of Canada is being listened to with respect and consideration by these our friends of Europe, Asia and America.

It was a memorable experience to sit at that Conference table and see gathered around me the Presidents, Chancellors or Prime Ministers of so many of the leading nations of the Free World. Because the seating order was alphabetically by countries, Premier van Acker of Belgium was on my right, and Premier Hansen of Denmark on my left. Present was President Eisenhower who appeared, I am happy to say, in excellent health and good spirits throughout the meetings. Among the others were, of course, Prime Minister Harold Macmillan of the United Kingdom, Chancellor Adenauer of West Germany and Premier Gaillard of France.

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And so, I conclude this very brief report on my mission abroad on a note of optimism. In summary, it will be enough perhaps to say that we faced the realities of international living in a spirit of informed realism; that there was no suggestion in our counsels of defeatism or despair; that we added to our strength by cementing our unity; and that we face the future, whatever it may bring, without illusion and without fear - in confidence, faith and determination to preserve the peace and our freedom, come what may.



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