

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES



INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 53/20

THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

Report of the Paris Meeting, April 23-26

Text of the radio broadcast by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. L.B. Pearson, over the CBC, May 3, 1953.

I am glad to have this opportunity to report briefly to you on the last session of the North Atlantic Council which began in Paris on April 23 and concluded on April 26, and at which, with my colleagues, Mr. Abbott and Mr. Claxton, I had the honour to represent Canada.

The meeting was not spectacular. The value of NATO however, cannot be measured by the achievements of three days, but only by comparing our present strength and solidarity, after four short years of collective effort, with our position of defensive weakness and strategic disunity in 1949 when the North Atlantic Treaty was signed.

If the meeting was not spectacular, neither was it controversial. The fourteen nations making up this coalition for peace, deeply conscious of the high stakes involved in their joint effort, sought to reach, and did reach, agreement on the matters discussed. The excellent preparatory work done in Paris by the Permanent Council and the international staff under Lord Ismay made such agreement much easier to achieve.

It was a useful and constructive meeting. During it the Council dealt with practical problems and decided on further measures for strengthening and improving our collective defence.

It was, furthermore, a timely meeting because it was of the utmost value for the Ministers representing 14 governments to be able to exchange views just now when the signs and portents, the signals and smoke screens, on the international horizon are perhaps more difficult to interpret than at any other period in NATO's short history.

No previous meeting of the Council has been marked by such sober confidence in the growing capacity of the North Atlantic community to defend itself and preserve the peace. The feeling was strong that if the policies we have already begun are continued with patience and persistence and wisdom we have the right to hope that war can be avoided.

This view was reflected in the statements of responsible political and military leaders at our meeting. We felt that if we did not relax our effort, the day was approaching when the NATO countries will have achieved the measures of defensive strength, based upon sound economies, which we set out to build four years ago. But we have not reached that position yet.

At its December meeting last year, the Council, in its annual "stock-taking" for 1952, learned that the increase in forces agreed to at Lisbon would have been substantially achieved by the end of the year, and announced that it was planned to make further individual and collective efforts in 1953 to increase, improve and strengthen these forces. At the same time, the Council at the earlier meeting directed that more emphasis should be given to increasing the quality and effectiveness of the NATO forces, and the units necessary for their support.

Thus it was in the light of those previous decisions, and after a review of progress made on the military side since the December meeting, that the Council this April agreed on short and long-term military programmes for NATO.

This agreement established a firm military programme for 1953 and provisional goals for 1954. As the Communique puts it: "...there will be a notable increase in the size of the forces assigned to NATO Supreme Commanders and a considerable improvement in their effectiveness. these factors will add materially to the defensive strength of NATO during 1953".

The Council on this occasion has omitted the publication of specific target figures in its official communique. This omission is deliberate, and was agreed unanimously by all Council members for two main reasons. There was, first, the security factor. We felt that as the armed strength of NATO grows, there is no advantage in communicating official and exact figures of men and guns and ships and aircraft to those who are not our friends and who have a special interest in such details. There is this further point, that emphasis on figures tends to obscure the fact that the qualitative improvement in forces, in the effectiveness and modernity of their equipment, in the organization of adequate support, was of equal importance to numbers.

There were two other points about this "stock-taking". First, we agreed that while our military forces must be prepared for action at any time, we must plan on the basis of the long pull, and without tying ourselves too rigidly to arbitrary planning dates. Second, we were impressed again with the truth that a defence effort which left members of the alliance financially and economically exhausted, would defeat its own purpose. So we reaffirmed the need to take economic and financial factors into account in planning the rate of military progress, and, in the words of the communique, to see "that the development of sound national economies and the increase of military force should be pursued concurrently."

The Paris meeting showed that NATO is learning to work as a team; if you like, as a cabinet of governments.

May I give you one example of this. At Paris, the Council swiftly reached agreement on a far-reaching and important three-year programme for the building of common installations, including airfields, naval bases, signals, and communications. This will cost something like 316 millions of pounds.

We also agreed, subject to the approval of parliaments, on how the costs of these joint facilities should be divided up between us. Canada's proportion - if Parliament votes the money - will be 7.13 percent.

Decisions of this kind, based upon long months of careful, detailed planning, and the action which flows out of them, are essential to the building of the central nerve system on which our physical defence depends. We made great progress in this vital field at Paris.

The essence of any real partnership - and the NATO partnership is no exception - is free, frank, and continuous consultation. Without this, and the mutual confidence on which it must be based, NATO would be built on sand and crumble away. We had this kind of consultation at Paris - especially on the current international situation and on a number of political questions of mutual concern.

Among other things, we looked at the prospects for the establishment of the European Defence Community. We were told once again about the difficulties in bringing this scheme into operation, but we all felt that it was essential that these difficulties should be surmounted as quickly as possible.

It was agreed that full and active participation of free German forces was as essential to the collective defence of the NATO countries as it was to the defence of Western Germany itself. It was our view at NATO that this participation could best be achieved through the European Army. So the Council emphasized the "paramount importance" they attached to the rapid establishment of the European Defence Community.

Above all, we had a valuable and comprehensive exchange of views on the significance of the recent Soviet moves and gestures about which everyone has been speculating. It is a striking fact that, despite the different geographical and political situations of the individual NATO countries, there was a remarkable degree of unanimity both as to the facts of the latest Soviet "peace offensive", and as to how these facts should be interpreted.

We agreed that, to the extent to which these recent Soviet moves and gestures were proved by deeds to be genuine, they should be welcomed by countries like ours, whose policies have always been to seek every opportunity to resolve peaceably the outstanding international issues which now divide the world. At the same time, we were convinced that nothing had yet happened to alter the fundamental threat to our security; that no concrete development had taken place to justify the slightest relaxation in the collective defence efforts which the NATO peoples had been forced to make, because of Soviet intransigence. We were reminded by more than

one speaker during the conference that, while Soviet strategy remains unchanged and unchanging, Soviet tactics were flexible and provided for retreat as well as for attack.

The words of a former Secretary-General of the Communist International, written years ago, but still true today, were recalled.

"We are sometimes accused of departing from our Communist principles." - said M. Dimitroff then - "What stupidity! What blindness! We should not be Marxist and Leninist revolutionaries, nor disciples of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin if we were not capable of completely altering our tactics and our mode of action as circumstances may dictate. But all the deviations and all the ins and outs of our tactics are directed to a single end, the world revolution".

Thus we concluded that, while the NATO countries should be prepared to meet any genuine move towards conciliation half way, as, indeed, they always have done, we should do nothing which would leave us weaker if the mailed fist has only been withdrawn to strike at the free world with greater force at a more convenient time.

It was in the light of this discussion, that the Council reaffirmed the policy of collective defence which has proved fully justified and which has been responsible for the growing confidence of the free world. We must, at the same time, look forward to the day when we can put aside our arms, and take up the great tasks of national and international collaboration and construction which lie to hand, and which alone can make the North Atlantic community a reality. We must work for that day, but we will not bring it about by weakening our defences now under the softening influence of works alone.

That was the main conclusion reached at Paris. As a result of this meeting, I am more than ever convinced that while the United Nations is still our best hope for the solution of international problems and for international progress on a world scale, NATO is the most important and far-reaching development of our time for the organization of security and the defence of peace in the West.

I hope we will not forget this - as we become more and more accustomed to NATO's existence and if the feeling of crisis and tension should seem to lessen in the world.