

In my statement to the North Atlantic Council, I stated that, like others, we accepted that the threat to the alliance resulting from the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia was an indirect one, which faced NATO not with a problem of responding to premeditated aggression but rather of coping with the uncertainty and the possibility of miscalculation which recent Soviet conduct had fostered. In view of this situation, we agreed that NATO's continuing determination to resist any aggression directed against its members should be made clear, as well as the fact that the alliance could not be expected to remain indifferent to any further moves which even indirectly threatened its security.

While we accepted that it was natural in the existing circumstances to stress the defensive character of the alliance, we considered it was important that NATO should take advantage of all reasonable opportunities to resume the dialogue with the Soviet Union and thus to promote, in due course, progress toward the settlement of the issues facing Europe. We therefore supported the view that NATO's policy should be to keep open the option of normal relations with the U.S.S.R. against the day when the Soviet Union itself would recognize that such a course was in its own best interest. We urged that the communiqué should clearly reaffirm the alliance's pursuit of détente, together with the achievement of arms-control and disarmament measures, as its long-term objectives.

There is no doubt that on the eve of the Brussels meeting there was some concern on the part of the other members of the alliance regarding Canada's support for NATO. The events in Czechoslovakia had caused them to appreciate once again the value of NATO as a means of ensuring their security and they were naturally anxious that nothing should be done, particularly at this time, to detract from the solidarity of the alliance. By the time the meeting was over, I think we were able to satisfy our allies that we shared their concern about the future security of Europe; that although we were reviewing our foreign and defence policy, we should continue to live up to our commitments to NATO until such time as they might be altered; and that, if in the future the Government of Canada should consider changing our role in the alliance, we should, of course, consult with them.

In summary, the Canadian delegation to the Brussels meeting endeavoured to reconcile two main objectives.

The first of these was to emphasize -- in a measured and practical manner -- our condemnation of Soviet action in Czechoslovakia.

The second was to co-operate with our allies in producing a response to this action which was designed to influence in a constructive way the thinking of Soviet leaders -- to encourage them to resume the dialogue with the West rather than resort to the use of force in seeking solutions to problems.