

Admittedly, political and social co-operation among NATO's members must be pursued and progress must be made here if the coalition is to be strong and enduring. This applies also to trade and economic relationships. Defence co-operation and economic conflict are difficult to reconcile. It should, in fact, be a first objective of the NATO members to reduce and remove the obstacles to the freest possible trade between themselves and, equally important, between themselves and the rest of the free world. A restrictive and controlled trading area within NATO would put a great strain on the cohesion and unity of the group for other purposes. Equally unfortunate would be the adoption of such ring-fence policies as the basis of the relationship between NATO countries and other free democracies. When we talk about developing and strengthening NATO economic co-operation we do not, I hope, mean that kind of co-operation.

The most urgent and immediate problem, however, remains defence against aggression. This should - I am myself convinced still be given first priority over other NATO plans; all the more because it embodies a short-term objective. We have the right to hope that when this objective is reached - but only then - we can devote more of our NATO time, energy and resources to constructive non-military policies which can be pursued while we maintain the level of defensive strength necessary until international political developments make its reduction possible. And "maintaining" should not require as great an effort as "building".

What progress, then, are we making in the building up of defence and deterrent forces - adequate for this purpose - and no more than adequate?

Well, NATO's strength has been steadily increasing. Canada by sending a Brigade Group and fighter squadrons overseas has contributed to that increase and thereby to the strengthening of our hope for peace. Not only have NATO forces under arms been increased, essential airfields are being constructed and put into use; training programmes have been got under way. Communications services and other facilities are being developed and modern equipment is now coming from the assembly lines. Finally, a supreme command for all NATO forces in Europe has been organized. If the worst should happen, and war be forced on us - because that is the only way it could come about - NATO forces in Europe could now give a much better account of themselves than they could a year ago. But they are not yet strong enough to give assurance that the initial assault could be successfully resisted. NATO members - especially the European members - have the right to that assurance, all the more because in the military and strategic and technical circumstances of today the land defence against and the air counter-attack to the initial assault may be decisive. Forces in being and the power immediately in reserve may decide the issue.

The minimum defence required to meet such an initial shock was agreed on at Lisbon, though there can never be fixed and final decisions in these matters. The Lisbon programme was not one that could, I think, fairly be attacked as militaristic, or unrealistic, having regard to the danger which made defence necessary. Furthermore, it was a firm programme for 1952 only, the figures for 1953 and 1954 were for planning purposes only, subject to revision later in the light of political and economic considerations.