

honoured the country. It is not without significance that our delegation was the first Western delegation to visit Czechoslovakia during the recent period.

Under the new Czechoslovak Constitution there is a federal assembly consisting of two houses, one called the House of Nations, the other the House of the People. There are as well two national assemblies, one for the Czechs and one for the Slovaks called respectively the Czech National Council and the Slovak National Council. One of the high points of our trip was a visit to Bratislava, the capital city of the Slovak Socialist Republic, where we were warmly welcomed and acquainted with progress being made in Slovak national development by the Vice-Chairman, Mr. Anton Tazky, and members of the Slovak National Council. I am sure that Senator Flynn will recall the morning of discussion with him, in the old Palace at Bratislava, about matters of interest and concern to us, and which we know to be of interest and concern to them.

In Prague, Dr. Cestmir Cisar, the Chairman of the Czech National Council, who was closely identified with the program which preceded the invasion of August of last year, received us graciously, and gave us the opportunity of several hours of frank discussion with him about matters that concerned his country and its relations with other European countries. He gave us the fullest responses to our interrogations, and participated in a general and frank discussion.

Each of us, in his own way, have interpreted these discussions and will report to the Government of Canada. This will help in making assessment of our relations with Czechoslovakia.

We had the special opportunity, as I indicated a few moments ago, of meeting and exchanging views with Alexander Dubcek, the Chairman of the Czechoslovak Federal Assembly and, until a few months ago, the effective and actual head of the Government of Czechoslovakia, and who continues to be an important personality in the Government of that country. He is a member of the Praesidium, and the head of the Czechoslovak Federal Assembly.

He spoke to us at length during the course of an entire afternoon, emphasizing Czechoslovakia's loyalties to the countries of Eastern Europe. He also went to great pains to describe the background and workings of the new Constitution and the hopes that his country had for it. I was impressed by him, as I

am sure we all were, and by his sincerity, his idealism, and his patriotism. We could not help but feel sympathy for what he had been through and for his continuing trials in the tragically complicated position in which he, his friends, and his country find themselves at the present time.

I think I can assure honourable senators that we found in Czechoslovakia a very general understanding of the position taken by Canada after the events of last August. In condemning the aggression, Canada refused to accept that any state or group of states has a right to intervene with force in the domestic affairs of another state, but we realized fully the difficulty and delicacy of Czechoslovakia's position, and tried—I hope successfully—in no way to render it more difficult. I can say that the Canadian position continues to remain the same, and my remarks today must, of course, be taken in this context.

Czechoslovakia faces many difficulties created by geography and by historical, political, and economic forces, many of which lie beyond its control. Our visit helped us to understand better the nature of these difficulties, and encouraged our hope that a way can be found through them which will accord with the deep and noble aspirations of the Czech and the Slovak peoples. I believe too that there was no more appropriate way to underline the sympathy and admiration of the Canadian people than through a parliamentary exchange of this sort.

As Secretary of State for External Affairs, I have participated in many conversations with foreign ministers and others, and I can say quite frankly that I do not think there were any that were more frank or more useful than those we had with Mr. Dubcek and his colleagues on both the Czech and the Slovak sides. In making this report of our visit to Czechoslovakia in this general way, I hope I have indicated that we had the opportunity of frank talk and exposition. We have now a common responsibility, as members of the delegation, to make the best use of the information and the reactions we bring back.

We went to Europe not only to visit Czechoslovakia, but to accept an invitation to participate as observers at the twenty-first session of the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe. This is an organization about which we in Canada have no great knowledge. It has been operating in Europe for 20 years, thanks to the leadership and inspiration of men like Winston Churchill. It is about that meeting that I wish to say something now.