

Our cultural relations, too, could be expanded. In spite of some few visits of professors, students and journalists, Canadians and Romanians are largely uninformed about each other. We have a common base from which to work, for both our countries have benefited richly from the strong influence of the French language and culture. I hope that in the future we can do more in this area as well in order to achieve a better understanding and a more vital exchange between our people.

Like Romanians, we in Canada are vitally interested in the search for real détente in Europe and for a lasting solution to Europe's security problems. Europe has for too long been immobilized by artificial rigidities. We wish to explore every opening there may be for discussing seriously the issues that block the path to a stable and equitable political settlement on this continent.

Concerning the holding of a European security conference, which is as much in your minds as in ours, we have taken a positive and forthcoming attitude both in NATO and in our bilateral discussions with other European countries. This has been reflected in Canadian statements in the House of Commons and in NATO and in the Canadian reply to the Finnish initiative of May 1969.

We regard the communiqué and declaration issued by the NATO ministerial meeting in Rome last week as an important and positive move forward and we hope it will be so recognized by others. NATO has now accepted in principle the idea of multilateral exploratory talks with all interested parties about a conference on European security and co-operation. It has also made a precise offer, through the Italian Foreign Minister, to discuss with the other side the possibility of initiating discussions on mutual and balanced force reductions in accordance with certain guidelines. This represents a serious effort on the part of Canada and its allies to move from military confrontation to negotiated solutions of the underlying causes of tension.

I hope this NATO initiative will evoke a favourable response from the other countries of Europe, both aligned and non-aligned, so that further progress can be made. I think it should meet with sympathy and understanding in Romania because it corresponds closely to initiatives the Romanian Government has already taken for the purpose of encouraging movement toward a conference.

We think that a large-scale conference at the right time and in the right circumstances would be useful, that "all governments concerned" should participate, but that the agenda and timing are related in the sense that we must establish what problems are ripe for successful negotiation before we can determine whether it would be appropriate to hold a conference to deal with them. We are concerned to avoid holding such a conference prematurely, and for us the important thing at the moment is to move forward with the negotiating process rather than to decide when a conference might be held. This negotiating process has already begun in the form of bilateral discussions between countries of Eastern and Western Europe, negotiations between the GFR and its Eastern neighbours, and the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks. We hope it will continue and expand with preliminary discussions on mutual and balanced force reductions and exploratory talks about a conference on European security and co-operation. But negotiations can make progress only when there is a readiness all around to talk about something more than a mere freezing of the status quo in Europe. It