

Shortly thereafter, the Minister of National Defence and I will go to the NATO ministerial meeting in Paris. There we will have the opportunity for further conversations with the French Government, continuing the series of Franco-Canadian ministerial meetings which began over a year ago. It is my expectation that the whole subject of how to ensure a greater sharing in the direction of the Alliance will be thoroughly aired at the NATO ministerial meeting and at consultations which will take place at that time.

Any development that could create a special group within the Western alliance to the detriment of a broadly based transatlantic NATO alliance is bound to be of concern, I wish to re-emphasize, to this country. By the same token, any development that could start an irreversible trend toward the break-up of our alliance or to an Alliance based on continentalism of either a North American or European variety will be contrary and prejudicial to our national interests.

The smaller countries of the alliance, because they must depend on collective security for their defence, have special cause to seek a way out, and this was emphasized to us in the talks that we had with Mr. Spaak and Mr. Lange here last week. The extremely useful discussions that we had gave us an opportunity of emphasizing the large area of agreement that does exist on the basic aims of the alliance, even though, in this highly controversial field, there are divisions of view as to how we should conduct the strategic planning of the Organization. These discussions reinforced my view that special efforts would have to be made to convince our allies that a fresh examination is essential if the alliance is to avoid a perilous division over certain aspects of its policy.

We have asked our allies who have supported proposals for a multilateral force whether the present form of the proposals is necessarily the only way to deal with what all of us recognize to be necessary, a means of giving the European members of the alliance a greater degree of participation in the strategic arrangements of NATO. There is always a danger that a formula appropriate to one period can harden into policies which are too rigid to another.

We should ask those who do not like the multilateral force and the proposals based on it, and who suggest that our alliance does not correspond to the realities of 1964, what is suggested as an alternative. I am sure there is no member of the alliance that would not welcome constructive counter-proposals. Since all members of NATO recognize — and this was fully apparent at the last NATO ministerial meeting at The Hague — that the need for the alliance remains undiminished, it follows that we can neither afford to split the alliance in two nor plunge it into a course against the will of a major member.

It is to the avoidance of these extremes that the Canadian Government is devoting its most careful attention at this time in the discussions we are having. It is traditional for Canada to look for a compromise when friends disagree. As I suggested a few weeks ago, we believe there may be an alternative course that has not yet been sufficiently explored. We have wondered whether we could not make use of the existing machinery within the alliance to bring about a greater sharing in the military direction of NATO.