

The NATO Council functions not only as an important point of exchange and consultation for the ideas and intentions of its members but also as a transmitting station for signals to the other side. The issues before the recent meeting were, simply stated, what ideas and intentions should be conveyed to the countries of Eastern Europe, and in what ways they should be carried forward. All those present at the meeting had very much in mind that the ideas conveyed and the manner of their communication should be such as to make clear our desire to improve relations and negotiate outstanding issues. For our own part, in our contribution to the Brussels meeting we sought to advocate attitudes and measures which would be both realistic and conciliatory, to steer between the rigid "No" and the unthinking "Yes".

At the meeting, I put forward the view that NATO should seize the initiative by showing a clear willingness to start discussion of specific issues. The inclusion in the declaration of a proposal for early discussions on mutual and balanced reductions in Europe is one example of this, in the sensitive but vital field of arms control. This proposal is an advance on the previous NATO position and one that we actively promoted. We should have preferred a more precise formula, making clear, for instance, the regional limits and other detailed conditions which in the view of NATO members would govern any such force reductions. Others felt that such specifics should await some response from the nations of Eastern Europe, which up to now has not been forthcoming.

The declaration contains a section on Germany and Berlin which, among other things, gives support to the proposals of the West German Government for a modus vivendi between the two parts of Germany and for a related bilateral exchange of declarations on the non-use of force. I have no doubt of the firm resolve of Chancellor Willy Brandt's Government to break new ground in searching for solutions to the complex problems which have divided Europe for a generation. The response of the East to these overtures will be an important test of their intentions. The news this morning that negotiations have begun between the Soviet Union and the Federal German Republic on an exchange of declarations renouncing the use of force is a hopeful sign.

I also suggested that it would be useful to broaden the East-West dialogue to include discussion of non-political subjects such as the pollution of the environment, about which both sides are increasingly concerned, and the declaration also invites co-operation on this topic.

There has been much public discussion of the idea of a European security conference. I hope that such a conference will be held, at the right time and in the right circumstances. Such a conference is only one way of making progress toward the settlement of European problems, and for the time being it may not be the most effective.

Bilateral governmental contacts between countries of Eastern and Western Europe are a commonplace today, and there are many multilateral opportunities that underline the point that there is no shortage of meeting places or meetings. Canada attaches great importance to this process and plays an active part, as illustrated by the recent visit to Ottawa of the Soviet Foreign Minister, Mr. Gromyko.

Secondly, I do not doubt that, if and when it appears that a full security conference would be productive of tangible results, it could be readily organized. I am equally certain that Canada would be among the participating nations. What