

It was the strong and unanimous view of the ministers that the Soviet Union's use of force in Czechoslovakia had not only jeopardized peace and international order but had also violated the basic right of the people of Czechoslovakia to shape their own future without outside interference. In view of earlier Canadian condemnation of Soviet action, you will not be surprised that we supported this approach by the Council.

There was also agreement that the use of force and the stationing in Czechoslovakia of Soviet forces not hitherto deployed there gave rise to uncertainty about the future intentions of the U.S.S.R. After all, the Soviet Union had demonstrated an impressive capability to bring substantial military force speedily to bear on a situation in Central Europe. Its decision to intervene with force in Czechoslovakia could not help but raise questions as to whether such an approach foreshadowed a new direction in Soviet policy for the future. It is hardly any wonder that, in the words of the communiqué, it was considered that this uncertainty required great vigilance on the part of the alliance. For us in Canada it is not always easy to put ourselves in the position of our European allies. However, I am sure that the reality of the concern and uncertainty felt by them will have been sensed by Members of Parliament who had the opportunity to attend the recent meeting of the North Atlantic Assembly, which happened by coincidence to be held in Brussels the same week as the ministerial meeting.

The ministers also expressed their concern about the Soviet contention, made following the invasion of Czechoslovakia, that there was a "Socialist Commonwealth" within which the U.S.S.R. had the right to intervene if it considered that developments in the area were inimical to its own interests. This concern, of course, paralleled our own, which I referred to earlier in the fall, during my statement to the United Nations General Assembly on October 9. I said at that time that Canada could not accept that a community of interests, real or alleged, political, cultural or economic, entitles one country to take upon itself the right to interfere in the internal affairs of another. In the Commonwealth of Nations to which we belong, the right of national self-determination is so taken for granted that member countries are free to develop ties with any other countries, including socialist countries.

The doctrine of the Socialist Commonwealth is the antithesis of the principle of non-intervention recognized in the United Nations Charter. It is particularly disturbing for the implications it could have for attempts at rapprochement and the ultimate unification of the two parts of Germany. In this context, the ministers in Brussels confirmed the support of their governments for the declared determination of the United States, Britain and France to safeguard the security of Berlin and to maintain freedom of access to the city. This part of the communiqué represents a reaffirmation of existing commitments for Canada.

The ministers accepted that the uncertainties extended to the Mediterranean basin. They agreed that recent expansion of Soviet activity in that area required continuing vigilance to ensure that the security of the alliance was not adversely affected. It was also accepted that there should be a continuing effort on the part of members of NATO to find political solutions for the problems of the region which would help to ensure its peaceful evolution.