

The Paper reaffirmed that Canada would not only continue to contribute to alliance security in the North American and North Atlantic regions but would also continue to station significant forces in Europe as part of the NATO integrated force structure.

The Paper goes on to say:

"The decision reflected the Government's judgment that Canadian security continues to be linked to Western Europe and that Europe is still probably the most sensitive point in the East-West balance of power. It is the area from which any conflict, however limited, might most readily escalate into all-out nuclear war engulfing Canadian territory."

NATO is the most important forum in which North Atlantic countries can work toward the reduction of East-West tension. The alliance has become increasingly effective as a forum for consultations on defence and arms-control questions and many other political issues. One of the most compelling reasons for Canada to remain a member of NATO is the important political role that the alliance is playing - and that we can play as a member - in reducing and removing the underlying causes of potential conflict by negotiation, reconciliation and settlement. We continue to attach great significance to this aspect of the alliance's activities.

It is the Canadian view - shared by other members of the alliance - that we should carefully and prudently take advantage of changes in the East bloc and a greater receptiveness on the part of Eastern European countries to try to deal with them on a business-like basis. We have already gone a considerable distance in this policy, for example, through the visit of our Prime Minister to the Soviet Union in May of this year. We are now preparing for the return visit of Mr. Kosygin, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union, next month. We have no illusions about the difficulties in resolving major differences in these contacts, but there are benefits to be reaped, not only by the NATO country concerned but also by the alliance as a whole. The sum of all the bilateral contacts can have an important impact on the development of *détente*.

Mutual balanced force reductions is a long-standing NATO objective in the struggle to reduce tensions in Europe and one to which Canada attaches great importance. Reductions of the forces confronting each other could provide continuing security for both sides - and I emphasize "both sides" - while lowering defence costs. The Brezhnev speeches of March and May this year may signal a breakthrough. Certainly the indications that the Soviet Union is serious about force reductions negotiations must be followed up. Canada supports NATO efforts to prove Soviet intentions bilaterally. We also think that a representative of the alliance could supplement bilateral contacts by discussing with the Soviet Union and others the possibilities of moving to negotiations as soon as possible, on the basis of agreed principles. We were gratified that NATO ministers, at their meeting in June, endorsed the explorer idea and that this and other ideas will be examined at the high-level meeting in Brussels next week. The MBFR issue is very complex, involving as it does the forces of many countries in several parts of central Europe,