

It has also been claimed that the threat of war leading to the creation of NATO has dissipated and that the Soviet Union has many preoccupations other than Europe. It may be true that the Communist states have given up their hopes for an early triumph of Communism in Western Europe and that both the ideological tone of discussions and inter-state relations have improved. The Russians have advanced in some ways which are welcome to the West, but little change can be found in their basic policies on a settlement for Europe.

We must set alongside whatever evidence there may be of softening in Soviet attitudes the incontrovertible evidence brought forward by military specialists that, in the real terms of modern military power, there has been no weakening or withdrawal in the Soviet position.

A great deal has been made also of claims about a supposed loss of sovereignty or of scope for effective international action because of participation in the international organization set up under the North Atlantic Treaty.

It is quite true that NATO nations, by the free exercise of their sovereignty, chose to enter into an alliance in the pursuit of certain common and overriding interests. They may have had to give priority to these interests in some cases over other national interests. But the alliance has scarcely become a political strait-jacket because of this. Indeed, critics of NATO on other occasions have pointed out that, on many matters involving the commitments of members elsewhere in the world or their relations with the Communist nations, there has been a considerable diversity in viewpoint.

Even if there has been room for diversity, of course, NATO countries have remained firmly together on the main issues of East-West relations. Recent French actions have created concern in the minds of some that French views might change on some of these main issues. In this connection, I am glad to note that Premier Pompidou indicated in a statement in the National Assembly on April 13 that there was no question of France reversing its stand on basic questions in East-West relations. This assurance has been particularly important, since it has come more or less on the eve of the trip of the French President to the Soviet Union.

It is certainly our hope that France will continue to identify itself with the points of view which have characterized the thinking of NATO members. It will be the objective of Canadian diplomacy to help ensure that the area of agreement between France and its allies is maintained and extended. It will equally be our objective to ensure that there are as few obstacles as possible to France's full partnership, if it decides in the future that an altered organizational structure really does serve France's interests.