

There were reasons enough for NATO to undertake a thorough re-assessment of its future role when the decision by France to withdraw from NATO's integrated defence arrangements made it urgent that the Organization adjust itself to the changing circumstances. Convinced that France had an important and enduring role to play in the alliance, Canada was particularly anxious to find ways of ensuring that France would continue to be as closely associated as possible with NATO. We are, therefore, gratified that suitable arrangements are being worked out to this end.

We are also pleased that NATO is tackling with realism the task of adjusting its conceptions and its machinery to the new demands of a Europe in full transition from the immediate threat of war to the promise of peaceful co-operation. Indeed, I consider that NATO has increasing importance as an organization which can contribute towards an eventual peace settlement in Europe.

It is our earnest hope that the day will come when NATO, as a defensive alliance, will no longer be needed. In the meantime, Canada cannot, any more than the United States, fail to be involved in arrangements for European security. Canada, along with the United States, will have to participate in the general conference on European security which we believe should be held when the time is ripe. Careful preparation will, of course, be required if such a conference is to be successful.

The trend towards closer relations between Western Europe and the Communist states of Eastern Europe is, we think, a hopeful development. Canada is itself seeking to strengthen its contacts with the countries in Eastern Europe. Last November, I visited Poland and the Soviet Union, where I had useful discussions with the leaders of those countries. My visit was only one of those made by foreign ministers of NATO countries in recent months. Through such visits, and in other ways, we hope that East-West relations will continue to improve.

We also hope that Germany, which lies at the heart of the problem of an eventual European settlement, will share fully in these efforts. We therefore welcome the recent initiatives of the Federal German Republic in seeking an improvement in its relations with the countries of Eastern Europe, and we hope that the latter, for their part, will show their genuine desire for a lasting peace by responding positively to these initiatives.

Canada's own experience as a nation leads us to believe that patient but determined efforts to achieve a genuine understanding with countries whose ideology and traditions differ from our own is the most likely path to a lasting peace in Europe.

I have been speaking of our joint and distinctive foreign-policy interests in Asia and Europe. In our own Hemisphere, we again find a situation where our differing traditions and interests have resulted in contrasting policies.