

world in which change has been so noticeable in recent years as in Europe; there are few areas where Canada's existing relations are so diverse and extensive; there are few areas where Canadian foreign policy has been so much a subject for debate.

We have the additional reason for assigning first priority to Europe that, at the same time, the Government is undertaking a review of defence policy. A very large and important part of Canada's defence efforts is directed towards Europe in pursuance of the commitments we have made as a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. It was, therefore, important that, at the same time as we were reviewing our defence policy, we should review our relations with Europe in the political, economic and other fields which are inevitably intermingled with our defence commitments.

The Special Task Force on Europe is made up of senior officials representing those government departments with special interest in our relations with Europe. It is under the joint chairmanship of Mr. Robert Ford, our Ambassador to the U.S.S.R., and Mr. Paul Tremblay, our Ambassador to Belgium. External Affairs supplies the secretariat and the Task Force will report through me to the Prime Minister and the Government. The officials here today are members of the Task Force and senior officers of External Affairs directly concerned with our relations with Europe.

The Task Force began its work last summer and since then has compiled, probably for the first time, a comprehensive inventory of our past and present relations with the countries of Eastern and Western Europe (including Britain) and with European organizations. In the process of collating this material, certain major issues have emerged, and it is with a view to having these issues discussed that this seminar has been organized. The Task Force and the Government will then have the benefit of your views when they proceed to draw conclusions from the review of European policy.

It is to inform and stimulate this discussion that a background paper and a series of five discussion papers were prepared on the official side and circulated in time for you to reflect on them before coming here. I wish to emphasize that they were not designed to express official positions or to suggest conclusions or to prejudge your discussions in any way, but only to focus discussion on the issues that appear to the Task Force to be among the most important. They do not exclude your raising other issues or suggesting other approaches.

In this spirit, it may be helpful if I say a word about our objectives and interests in Europe, which are closely related to the topics figuring on your agenda. To begin with, there are two basic Canadian problems which are interrelated and which have important external aspects: the problem of national unity and the problem of national identity. The first involves the reflection in our foreign policy of the bilingual nature of Canada, and has particular reference to our relations with France. The second involves the difficulty a country in Canada's position encounters in creating and projecting a distinctive way of life. This difficulty has been aggravated by the considerable increase in our relations with the United States since the last World War and by the relative increase in the power and influence in world affairs of that country during this period. It is a question whether Canada should seek to develop its interests in other parts of the world, and particularly in Europe, as a counterweight to the increasing influence of the United States.