

Shortly before leaving Ottawa, I met with leading members of the United States Administration, led by Secretary Rogers, and discussed the same general range of topics with them.

The timing of my visits to Europe was determined by the NATO ministerial meeting which is held every December to discuss both defence and political questions, so I should like, first of all, to say something about Canada and NATO. In the course of the foreign policy review, one of the questions that had to be faced and settled early was our membership in NATO and related questions of force contribution in Europe. The result was that Canada is -- and will remain -- a fully committed member of the North Atlantic alliance. Canada's security is inextricably bound up with Europe's and Canada will continue to play its part in European security arrangements.

These decisions were taken after exhaustive examination of factors and trends in Europe, attitudes in Canada and alternatives ranging from disengagement from current world power relations to increased involvement in collective security arrangements. Few if any NATO countries have subjected their membership in NATO to so thoroughgoing a study. That Canada has done so, and determined that Canadian interests call for continued membership and continued military presence in Europe, strengthens the alliance.

Against this background, the precise allocation of Canadian defence resources -- as between the European theatre and the North American and Atlantic regions of NATO -- is largely a matter of deciding where these resources can be used most effectively in the common interest. I can tell you, however, that the Canadian Government has no plans for any further reduction in the level of its military contribution in Europe in the foreseeable future.

The foreign policy review went well beyond considerations of security. Of necessity, much of it was devoted to the central problem facing Canada: how to live distinct from but in harmony with the United States, the greatest power on earth. The nations of Western Europe share this problem but in Canada's case it is magnified by geographical proximity, economic interdependence, the shared defence of the North American continent and the pervasive influence of American culture on Canadian society.

The maintenance of an adequate measure of economic and political independence in the face of American power and influence is a problem we share with the nations of Western Europe. In dealing with this problem, there is at once a community of interest and an opportunity to work together. Canada seeks to maintain close political, economic and social ties with Europe, not as an anti-American measure but to create a healthy balance of relations within the North Atlantic community.

While many people in Europe have a full understanding of the historical and cultural links that bind Europe to Canada and of the great opportunities for a scientific and economic co-operation that can contribute to both our societies, there is a too-frequent tendency among European leaders to say to Canada: "Your interests are adequately taken care of by your close relations with the United States; accept the fact that you are a North American nation, sort out your problems with the United States."