

allies to ask themselves whether we are making a respectable contribution to maintaining security in the world.

I heard last night a strong criticism of my attitude with regard to NATO. There certainly must never be any restriction on the right of dissent in this country. But in my capacity as foreign minister in Canada I would regard it as a matter of the gravest significance if any such unilateral decision were to be made in present circumstances.

Now, I do not say that these considerations are necessarily of lasting validity. I am not insensitive, nor is the Government, to the argument that Canada's contribution be made from bases in Canada. Indeed, Canada provides a battalion, which is stationed in Canada, for what is known as the ACE Mobile Force for use on NATO's northern flank. The day may come, with changes in technology and strategy, where it would be feasible and satisfactory to ourselves and to our allies to make our entire contribution from Canada. But in the meantime Canada, as a responsible member of the international community, cannot fail to take into account the political consequences of unilateral action to withdraw forces from Europe. By the same token, Canada must feel strongly that any unilateral action contemplated by any individual member state would have to bear the same strictures in so far as Canada is concerned.

If one agrees that Canada should continue to make appropriate contributions to NATO forces in Europe, and I certainly do, it does not of course mean that the character or level of our present contribution should remain static. Obviously our contribution must relate to changing requirements. If, for instance, it should prove possible to reach agreement on mutual reductions of NATO and Warsaw Pact forces, this could affect the level of Canadian and United States forces in Europe.

This is not of course the only arms control measure which we seek. Indeed, as I have already indicated, the Government will support efforts to improve East-West relations and to achieve disarmament agreements, thereby increasing our security in Europe and in the world.

The specific form of our contribution is under continuing review, and it has in fact changed significantly over the years. One example will, I think, illustrate my point. In the middle fifties Canada provided twelve squadrons of F-86 interceptor aircraft to NATO. These were replaced in the early sixties by eight squadrons of F-104 aircraft, six squadrons of which had a strike role and two a reconnaissance role. This year as a result of attrition we are reducing the number of squadrons of strike aircraft from eight to six. At some time in the seventies all the F-104 aircraft will be phased out. At the appropriate time in the future the Government will have to decide what position to take on a follow-on aircraft.

It will be apparent that changes of weapons of the kind I have illustrated are of necessity gradual. First, each national contribution represents only a part of the total forces available to the NATO commanders and adjustments in these contributions must be phased into the over all plan.

Secondly, the expense of modern weapons is such that a commitment, once the equipment has been procured and the training completed, cannot lightly be abandoned in favour of another commitment requiring new equipment and training.

In summary, Mr. Chairman, I think I have mentioned some of the considerations which affect the Government's present policy to NATO, and it seems to me that these support the argument that continuation of the Alliance will actually facilitate progress towards an eventual peace settlement, and can in the meantime assist in the improvement of East-West relations.

A recent European visitor to my office, a man with a profound understanding of European problems, put the issue to me in this way. He said: «NATO is