

The meeting of NATO Foreign Ministers in Bonn next week comes at an historic moment in East-West relations. The ratification last week of the Moscow and Warsaw Treaties by the Federal Republic of Germany makes possible the signature of the final protocol of the agreement on Berlin. At the same time, President Nixon will have just completed his talks with Soviet leaders on many issues of central importance to the Alliance. Ministers will thus be called on to chart the Alliance's course for the next state of East-West negotiations.

Two topics will probably dominate the Bonn meetings: preparations for a Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe and Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions.

Canada supports the idea of a Conference provided it is well prepared and has good prospects for success. We are pleased that with the successful conclusion of an agreement on Berlin, the way will be clear for intensified consultations among potential participants including Canada, in multilateral discussions preparatory to a Conference. We look to the initiation of these multilateral talks with the minimum of delay consistent with thorough, step-by-step, preparation.

The second issue at Bonn will be MBFR. Several months ago, on the basis of a Canadian initiative, Alliance members appointed Manlio Brosio, former Secretary-General of NATO, to act as their representative in an effort to open a dialogue with the USSR and others on balanced force reductions. Unfortunately, the Soviet Union has not yet demonstrated the sincerity of its proclaimed interest in force reductions by responding to this overture. Faced with this situation Ministers in Bonn will probably turn their attention to possibly an alternative method of getting discussions started with the Soviet Union and its allies on this key disarmament issue.

The logical connection between a Conference on Security and the level of forces confronting each other in Europe is obvious. It is a Canadian aim to ensure that the timing aspect of this relationship particularly is taken into account in the Alliance and by the Soviet Union and its allies. In the final analysis, the success of our efforts to enhance security in Europe will be judged by the progress which is made in reducing the military confrontation there.

Bonn provides a key opportunity for Canada to put these points across and for NATO to take further practical steps in developing détente.