

In the past month or so, the question of the attitude of the Government of France toward the North Atlantic Treaty Organization has been one of the foremost questions in public attention and in the preoccupations of the other governments. It has been a source of concern to me and the Canadian Government.

The French Government intends to withdraw French forces from NATO's integrated military structure and French officers from the integrated headquarters. It has asked that the two integrated military headquarters known as SHAPE and the Central European Command be removed from France. It has proposed that Canadian and United States bases be withdrawn by April 1, 1967. The French Government is fully prepared to find a way to retain its forces in Germany and Berlin while transferring them from NATO to French command.

France intends, however, to remain a party to the North Atlantic Treaty and to participate in the activities of the NATO Council.

The other 14 members of NATO, including Canada, issued a declaration on March 18 that:

"the Atlantic alliance has ensured its efficacy as an instrument of defence and deterrence by the maintenance in peacetime of an integrated and interdependent military organization in which, as in no previous alliance in history, the efforts and resources of each are combined for the common security of all. We are convinced that this organization is essential and will continue."

I made it clear that the Canadian Government regretted the French decision and was not persuaded by the arguments which the French Government had used to justify its actions. I have also emphasized that we cherished our association with France, did not question France's dedication to the ideals in international relations which have guided the Western countries and hoped to continue to develop our very friendly relations with that nation.

I list the objectives which the Canadian Government intends to follow in the situation created by the proposed French action. In NATO our policy will be:

First, to seek, in consultation with our allies, including France as far as possible, to limit the damage to the unity and effectiveness of the alliance, and to recreate a relationship of mutual confidence among all the members.

Secondly, to help preserve the essential features of NATO's existing system of unified command and joint planning for collective defence.

Thirdly, to continue to maintain an appropriate contribution to NATO's collective defence system.