

Certainly we know that one of the great sources of strength of each democratic country is that we reach general agreement on national policy by the democratic method of free discussion and compromise. It would not therefore be surprising if we found that in an alliance of democratic countries the method of free discussion and compromise is also appropriate.

For the more the foreign offices of the North Atlantic nations exchange information - exchange their views of the world, their interpretation of what is happening - the more the governments consult; the more they debate together on what should be done; the greater is the chance that each will be able to correct the distortions in his own private view of the world; the greater the chance that each will follow a wise policy and that the policies of each will be very much the same.

I doubt very much whether the monolithic totalitarian Cominform world possesses this source of strength. My guess is that the Cominform states look at the world through one pair of peculiarly distorted Moscow spectacles.

My guess also is that the absence in the Cominform world of open differences of opinion over foreign policy is not a sign of strength but a sign of weakness. We know that this was the case with the Nazi totalitarian world.

I do not say that by a mere process of exchanging information, exchanging views, discussing, consulting, the North Atlantic nations can automatically reach agreement on policy. I do say that by doing all this they greatly improve their chances of reaching agreement on a sound policy. In order to reach agreement, however, something more is necessary - a common determination to reach agreement.

There comes a point on every issue in foreign affairs when a decision has to be made by the government of each ally. The processes of consultation have taken place; the response to the issue can no longer be delayed. Each national government must then exercise its own independent judgment. It is at that point that the strength of the alliance is tested. For it is at that point that a national government must take into account not only the direct effects of its decision on its own country, but its effects on its allies. This is indeed an old problem in alliances and one never easily solved.

Two and a half years ago (September 21, 1948), Mr. Pearson, in his first speech as Secretary of State for External Affairs of Canada, put this point as follows:

"The only course of realism today for the North Atlantic democracies is for each of them to consider problems arising out of their relations with one another as problems between friends and associates. This does not mean that each of us should do everything that any other member of the group says is in the interests of the whole association. It does, however, mean that each of us, before taking action in the political, economic or military field, must consider what the effect of its action will be on the total strength of the group as a whole - its total military, economic and moral strength."

The fact that this is appropriate in any alliance - indeed that it is essential to the full success of any alliance - does not mean that it is easy to accept. For it