



Bulletin

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GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF CANADA'S DEFENCE POLICY

The following is a recent statement by the Minister of National Defence, Mr. Léo Cadieux, to the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence:

...Before going into the defence aspects of the NATO ministerial meeting, you may find it helpful if I were to recall to your attention a little of the background and past history of Canada's defence involvement in NATO. In spite of our somewhat isolated geography, Canada has been involved during this century in two world wars and in several smaller ones. This experience has led to the acceptance by Canadians of two basic defence principles. First, that peace and prosperity for Canada depend on peace in the world and that Canadians have a responsibility to promote and preserve peace in the world; and second, that the only sensible approach for Canada in the pursuit of peace is to work collectively with like-minded nations.

We applied these principles to Europe during the precarious decade following the Second World War. The prospects for continued peace were uncertain, and our European friends were in military and economic disarray. In the early years of NATO, Canada responded, on the military side, to the pressing needs of co-operative defence by providing, under Mutual Aid, *matériel* sufficient to equip two and a half army divisions; we trained over 5,000 pilots; we provided over 1,000 aircraft and 25 naval ships. Forces were assigned or earmarked in all three environments: naval forces for service in the North Atlantic, a Brigade Group in Germany backed up by the balance of a division in Canada, and an Air Division in Central Europe.

As our allies grew in strength and self-assurance under the climate of confidence made possible by the

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alliance, we have been able, in consultation with them, to reduce our share of the European defence burden, both as a proportion of the total effort and in absolute terms. Although our force commitments are now less than they were initially, this has been compensated to a significant degree by extensive improvements in weapons and equipment. The Canadian forces now based in Europe constitute a relatively small but militarily significant and identifiably Canadian contribution to alliance defence.

The stability engendered by the NATO alliance gave rise during the mid-60s to hopes for more normal relations with Eastern Europe, and even for some optimism regarding an eventual settlement in Europe. You will remember that the keynote of the NATO ministerial meeting a year ago in Brussels was the promotion of *détente* between East and West and, in Reykjavik in June, we began to think in terms of an early start on negotiations with the Warsaw Pact countries for balanced reductions of Forces. Unfortunately, efforts in this direction were thwarted by the tragic events of last August. The unwarranted invasion of Czechoslovakia gave all member nations cause to reflect on the adequacy of the alliance defences, and it was apparent during our meeting two weeks ago that a consensus had developed. There was general agreement that the new situation called for increased vigilance and a qualitative improvement wherever possible in currently committed forces. The Czech crisis created a mood of caution and concern, and re-emphasized the need for defence preparedness in the face of an uncertain future.