

confidence and almost completely disrupted in their economic life. After the war our problems were of immediate, not ultimate, survival. But today we are concerned with longer-range problems of peace, of prosperity, of development. This is a measure of our progress.

Once the course of history has been changed, even a little, we are prone to look back and regard that change as inevitable. But in 1945, as we looked ahead, there seemed nothing inevitable or certain about the reconstruction of a democratic, prosperous, independent Western Europe that was to take place. There seemed nothing inevitable about a change in the old American habit of peace-time isolation, which had been dominant for 150 years. It was far from inevitable that countries that had never in peace-time pooled any part of their sovereignty would do so now and together organize a collective defence that, in the conditions of the modern world, might prove effective enough to deter another war. We were up against physical destruction, economic stagnation and political defeatism. Vast human and material resources had been blown away and destroyed in war. Out of this waste and weariness could we really construct something new that might help to meet and solve our problems?

Well - it was done. Gradually, hesitantly, painfully, but steadily, things were done. An alliance that was designed to be more than military was welded together in peace-time. Its members began to believe in the possibility of a secure peace - of a good life. Indeed, as the years went by, many even began to forget or ignore the continuing dangers of a yet more horrible war. So they became impatient with the structures and the processes that had made their own comfortable conclusions possible. They - some people and some governments - began to fall back into those historic nationalist grooves which had been the source of so much of the bloodshed and conflict and chaos they had recently endured. With recovery came also impatience and doubt and some distrust.

We should have seen this happening in the Atlantic alliance and countered it. In December 1964, Canada proposed in NATO a reassessment of the nature of the alliance in the light of these changing conditions. Little was done.

Unhappily, it is man's weakness to cling to the ideas, the institutions and the habits of the past - even the recent past - instead of adapting them to the needs of today and tomorrow. So it was with NATO. The weight of inertia and a vested interest in a new status quo, felt especially among the most powerful governments of the alliance, made it difficult to find anyone in a responsible position on either side of the Atlantic who was prepared to come forward and specify in any detail what should be changed. A lot of people were talking about the need for change but nobody, no government, in a position of power was really doing much about it. Then abrupt and unilateral action by France thrust change upon us. Crisis, as always, forced our hands.

We should have acted earlier and not under the compulsion of events. We should have tried to move forward together to a closer international association in order to remove the risk of sliding backwards. In these matters, there is no standing still. Surely the course that should have been taken - should still be taken - is clear.