

14. The Defence Planning Committee, which met in Ministerial Session on 14th November, will hold its next Ministerial Meeting in Brussels on 16th January, 1969.

On December 3, Mr. Sharp and Mr. Cadieux appeared before the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence to report on the Brussels meeting. The following is the text of the opening statement made to the Committee by the Secretary of State for External Affairs :

From the outset the NATO ministerial meeting recently held in Brussels had a special character going well beyond the customary annual ministerial appraisal of the international situation and the state of the alliance. For the first time in the history of the alliance, the ministers assembled in advanced session to deal specifically with the implications of a serious international development — namely, the Soviet invasion and occupation of Czechoslovakia. They did so in circumstances contrasting strongly with those surrounding their last two meetings.

Less than a year ago, in December 1967, they had met in regular session to proclaim a new emphasis on *détente* in the alliance's future activities. This new emphasis, which was seen as an essential prelude to a negotiated settlement of outstanding European problems, seemed warranted by the improved climate of East-West relations and the results of a year of intensive studies by the alliance. These studies had produced what became known as the Harmel Report, named after the Foreign Minister of Belgium, who played a leading role in its evolution. The theme of the Harmel Report, which was formally adopted by NATO ministers a year ago, is that future alliance policy should be based on the twin conceptions of deterring possible aggression and seeking solutions for East-West problems through a dialogue with the Eastern European countries. In approving the Harmel Report, Canada subscribed to a new collective emphasis on improving the political atmosphere, on developing East-West contacts and on concrete moves in the sphere of disarmament and arms control. All of this was done without sacrificing the security of members of the alliance.

At Reykjavik five months later, the ministers carried their *détente* policy a stage further with the concrete offer of mutual and balanced force reductions. At the time this move was seen as the first in a series which would eventually enable the security of Europe to rest on some more durable foundation.

It is only in the light of this background that the profound effect of the Czechoslovakian affair, particularly on the European members of NATO, can be measured.

On the eve of their meeting in Brussels, the NATO ministers faced a difficult dilemma. By its actions the U.S.S.R. had dramatically rejected a conception of *détente* upon which all Western planning had been based. In addition to hopes of successful arms-limitation talks with the U.S.S.R., the Western conception of *détente* had assumed that there would be a gradual evolution within the Communist bloc towards more humane and open societies, together with a gradual establishment of healthy relations between Eastern and Western Europe.