

NATO CONTINUES TO SEEK PROPER RESPONSE TO SOVIET THRUST

Alliance members are considering an accelerated schedule of ministerial meetings as well as substantive steps designed to adjust to the new situation arising from the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia.

The North Atlantic Council approved on 4 September the extensive work program developed by NATO Secretary General Brosio since the Czechoslovak crisis. A number of studies will be undertaken, aimed at providing a political-military assessment of the new situation. Certain to come under review are the warning time concept, force levels in relation to the Warsaw Pact, and crisis management procedures.

In meetings so far of the permanent representatives, the West Germans have sought to stress the need for military preparedness and to de-emphasize the detente theme featured in the 1967 Harmel Report on the future tasks of the Alliance. The French, who originally were reluctant to accept the Harmel Report, now are defending it because they wish to continue to promote detente. They urge that the report be promptly reaffirmed as the charter of Alliance policy. The members have agreed, however, that the projected studies should not anticipate policy decisions, such as a revision of the Harmel Report.

The members are continuing to review the question of national military contributions. In a statement on 4 September, the Defense Planning Committee--which does not include France, a nonparticipant in the integrated military command--called upon members to take into account "the implications of recent developments in Eastern Europe in the planning of their national forces." The statement also referred to the need to maintain an effective Alliance military capability, phraseology designed to cloak a dispute over qualitative versus quantitative strength. Belgium has already announced it will postpone plans to withdraw its forces from West Germany and will deploy additional elements there.

All Alliance members appear to agree that the ministerial meetings, now scheduled for December, should be shifted to an earlier date, although there are differing intentions regarding the scope and timing of such sessions. The British oppose a ministerial meeting in September as too "demonstrative," but they favor considering Brosio's work program. The West Germans hope that the ministers will discuss a proposal that member states declare that they do not intend to withdraw from the Alliance for a certain number of years.

SECRET