



Auckland church leader ALAN BRASH flew to Prague at 36 hours' notice to attend the congress sponsored by the World Peace Council.

He returns profoundly grateful that he made the trip and confident that in no way did he compromise himself.

Brash says his role now will be to testify to the realities of church life in East Europe and to impress on New Zealanders that there is a tremendous common-people movement in East Europe demanding peace.

Brash (70), one of New Zealand's most international churchmen (several years in Switzerland as deputy general secretary of the World Council of Churches) expects he will be branded "a bit of a communist" following the Prague visit.

"But anyone who knows me knows that that is a lot of rubbish," he says.

"I have always regarded the World Peace Council as being an eastern Europe operation whose publications are politically slanted — to



Alan Brash . . . I'm not compromised.

make the United States the one threat to peace," he says.

"There is no doubt their statements are one-sided.

"Of course that's a charge one can make against many publications — including the *Foreign Affairs Review* published by our own Government. It looks at the world from a very limited perspective and is also one-sided.

"I was invited to Prague by an old friend — KAROBY TOTH, bishop of the Presbyterian Church of Hungary.

"I went because of a very clear purpose. I believe the greatest threat to the human race is nuclear weapons. Not particularly American weapons or Russian weapons. I'm not anti-American or anti-Russian. I'm anti-war, particularly nuclear war.

"In that context the most dangerous spot in the world — where nuclear weapons are likely to be used — is along the east-west frontier.

"The invitation appeared (one): An opportunity to raise a flag against nuclear weapons; (two): A chance to cross the frontier and talk to people on the other side.

"I don't see it as an evil thing to talk to people who might become your enemies."

The congress involved 4000 delegates from all around the world (11, mostly trade unionists, from New Zealand).

"I suspect as many were from outside east-

The man who looked for peace in Prague

Auckland diary

by Michael Brett

ern Europe as inside it," says Brash.

"We talked about the issues of nuclear war; speeches were made from all kinds of perspectives; some were anti-west, some anti-east.

"We also divided into groups — ours was the religious group — and had a chance to talk about how we could work for peace and how we could persuade governments that the arms race is an insanity."

"I was able to sit down with people who have no

Christian faith and with other Christians and talk about ways to find a peaceful world. That's what it is all about as far as I am concerned."

"People here often ask, when there are demonstrations: Can they demonstrate in communist countries?"

"The first night of our congress the 4000 of us marched against nuclear weapons. At least 300,000 people (Prague population 1.3 million) marched with us.

"I have a deep conviction

this is a common-people's movement," he says.

"I don't feel compromised to talk to people if they are committed to peace.

"What I want to achieve is to get as many people both inside the church and out aware that the common people in a country like Czechoslovakia are even more committed to finding a way to peace than we common people here."

● Alan Brash, who lives on the North Shore, is

Auckland representative of the National Council of Churches and Auckland secretary of the Church and Society Commission which is concerned with community issues.

He was moderator of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand (1978-79) and before that was 14 years overseas with the Asian Council of Churches, director of Christian Aid (London) and then with the World Council of Churches at its Geneva headquarters.