

For the Canadian people these developments were a profound shock. Two world wars had brought home to us that we could not be indifferent to what was happening in Europe. The very nature of Soviet Communism with its denial of individual liberty and the history of Russian imperialist expansion made us all acutely aware that the threat to Western Europe was a threat to Canada. This threat confronted us with a crucial problem, a problem that had long been inherent in Canadian foreign policy. The existence of two powerful influences determining that policy, the one from the United Kingdom and the other from the United States, has always given rise to situations calling for skillful reconciliation. In the new situation brought about by the Soviet threat, the problem of reconciling the dual orientation of Canadian foreign policy was more delicate than ever.

With a limited military potential and with heavy obligations to develop the natural resources upon which the buoyancy and vitality of our economy depend, Canada had to consider how to reconcile the claims arising from the dual orientation as applied to defence. On the one hand the United Kingdom looked to Canada, as the next largest member of the Commonwealth, for both material and military support. On the other hand, there was our first obligation to make reasonable provision for the defence of our own territory, and, consistent with our size and strength and sovereignty, so to play an honourable role in partnership with the United States in the achievement of continental security.

Canada found the answer to this vital problem in NATO. In April, 1948, Mr. St. Laurent, who was then Secretary of State for External Affairs, spoke out in favour of an agreement for collective security by those like-minded peace-loving nations, who realized that because the aim of the Soviet Union was for the world domination of Communism directed from Moscow, we could no longer place our hopes for security in the United Nations.

Although he was one of the first to speak out in favour of this wider alliance, I do not wish to claim for Mr. St. Laurent or for Canada the whole credit in bringing about the birth of NATO. A number of others were thinking along the same lines at the same time and making pronouncements which helped to create an atmosphere favourable to the conclusion of the North Atlantic Treaty.

The United Kingdom was also faced with the problem of reconciling a dual orientation in its foreign policy. The Soviet threat had given the impetus to a strong movement for European integration. European Union was seen as the only alternative to the piecemeal succumbing of Western European countries to Soviet domination. The United States Government was lending its powerful support to the movement for political and economic integration of the countries of Western Europe.

In the United Kingdom there were serious misgivings about throwing in their lot exclusively with the Western European countries. If we look at a map of the British Isles we seem to see the United Kingdom with its back to Europe facing the Seven Seas. This is not a correct analogy, but it does illustrate the problem then facing Mr. Bevin. Inevitably the people of the United Kingdom look out towards the Commonwealth and feel that, although they are in Europe, their history and their destiny are determined mainly by their interests overseas.