



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 65/20 TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF OGDENSBURG DECLARATION

Address by the Honourable Paul Martin, Secretary of State for External Affairs, on the Occasion of the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Ogdensburg Declaration in Ogdensburg, New York, August 18, 1965.

We are gathered in Ogdensburg today to commemorate the historic meeting which took place here 25 years ago. That meeting between President Roosevelt and Prime Minister King represents - and will always represent - a watershed in the relations between our two countries. For it marked the beginning of our active partnership in the defence of this North American continent which we share between us.

We pride ourselves on the thousands of miles of undefended border that demarcate without dividing our two countries. But we sometimes forget that this has not always been so. We sometimes forget that, as far as Canada is concerned, much of the history preceding our Confederation as a nation was punctuated by fear of invasion from the United States. We sometimes forget that, to the extent that Canadians in those days were concerned about defence, they were concerned about maintaining their own political identity against any possible threat from the United States.

That is one perspective from which we must look at the Ogdensburg meeting. It is the perspective of a past which may have shrunk so far back into history that it seems unreal to all but historians. But it is a past, nevertheless, which we cannot leave out of account if we want to take the real measure of the progress we have made in developing a sane and sensible pattern of continental co-existence. Nor must we forget that it took another 70 years or so - a period of relative withdrawal and isolation for both our countries - before the events which were then taking shape launched us on the course that was first charted at Ogdensburg.

The meeting at Ogdensburg which we are today commemorating had two important results. First, it put an end to any thoughts there may have been on either side of the border that we should - or could - continue independently to plan and conduct each our own defence against the threat of the forces which were then ascendant in Europe. We in Canada - caught unprepared as were most of the Western allies - had committed almost all our slender resources to the battle in Europe, leaving little behind to defend our shores. The United States, caught off guard much the same as we were, was apprehensive that the enemy might obtain a foothold in Canada, thereby posing a direct threat to the North American continent as a whole.