

Let me recall to you the genesis of the North Atlantic Treaty. Within less than two years of the signature in San Francisco of the Charter of the United Nations, the high hopes of people everywhere for universal peace had given place to growing anxiety and fear. The Security Council upon which we had laid the primary responsibility for the maintenance of security was already ham-strung by the deliberate tactics of the Russian representatives. To all who were neither blind nor unwilling to see, it had become plain before the end of 1947 that, to further their imperialist ends, the Soviet government were determined to block, bully and undermine their former allies and to propagate their communist gospel by any and every means of internal subversion and external pressure. One by one the countries bordering on the Soviet Union were brought under the ruthless domination of the Kremlin. The Iron Curtain moved steadily westward and, in February 1948, free Czechoslovakia disappeared into the darkness of the Russian night. The heroic and untiring efforts of men of good will to carry into the building of world peace the dynamics of the Grand Alliance had failed of their central purpose - to establish a firm foundation for universal security. The United Nations had a fair record of accomplishment - a splendid record in many fields. But the United Nations had never been designed to compel the acquiescence of a Great Power. And in the face of Soviet determination and unrelenting Soviet pressure, the United Nations was not able to guarantee the keeping of peace.

It was against this sombre background of disillusion and in an atmosphere of widespread anxiety that the leaders of the Western world began to cast about for a means by which the further designs of the Soviet Union might be frustrated or, if war was to come again, a means by which the free nations might stand in confidence against aggression.

The flow of Marshall funds and other aid from North America (including Canadian grants and loans) was gradually having its effect in restoring the stability of Western Europe. The European nations through their mutual efforts in the Organization for European Economic Co-operation (the OEEC) had set their hands firmly to the task of reconstruction. In the field of economics and finance much progress had been made toward the restoration of Europe.

But it was plain that more than economic assistance was necessary if Western Europe was to survive. The growing threat of Communist imperialism could be met only by the creation, by those nations who had a will to it, of a political and military barrier of adequate deterrent strength. In the General Assembly of the United Nations in the autumn of 1947, the present Prime Minister of Canada, then Secretary of State for External Affairs, put the position quite plainly.

"Nations, in their search for peace and co-operation (Mr. St. Laurent said) will not, and cannot, accept indefinitely and unaltered a Council which was set up to ensure their security, and which so many feel has become frozen in futility and divided by dissension. If forced, they (these nations) may seek greater safety in an association of democratic and peace-loving states willing to accept more specific international obligations in return for a greater measure of national security."