

STATESMAN PAR EXCELLENCE
STATESMAN PAR EXCELLENCE
STATESMAN PAR EXCELLENCE

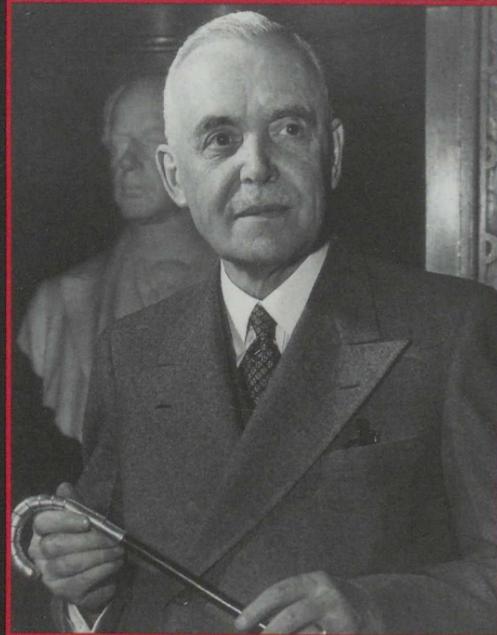


photo: National Archives of Canada

In 1947, **Louis Saint-Laurent** argued compellingly for like-minded countries to band together in a collaborative force that, in retrospect, sounds like NATO.

Two years before the Washington Treaty, Saint-Laurent, then Secretary of State for External Affairs, said, "Francophone and Anglophone Canadians had come as a people to distrust governments which rule by force and which suppress free comment on their activities."

He added, "The best guarantee of peace is the creation and preservation by the nations of the Free World of an overwhelming preponderance of force over any adversary or possible combination of adversaries. This force must not be only military; it must be economic; it must be moral."

CANADA and

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, over 1300 Canadian troops are serving in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's

Stabilization Force, striving to build peace. RCMP officers and other

Canadians outside the military are helping rebuild civilian life. In Germany, Canadians stand duty in NATO's airborne early-warning force.

NATO 50 YEARS OF PARTNERSHIP



At home, Canada maintains a 10 000-member force of naval, air and ground troops, ready to contribute to the Alliance's collective defence. It's the latest chapter in a partnership that began 50 years ago.

Back in 1948, Czechoslovakia's takeover by a communist government, followed by the Berlin blockade, set warning lights blinking. Antagonism between the Soviet Union and Western powers was leading to a cold war that could easily turn hot. Within a year, 12 Western countries, including Canada, signed the Washington Treaty founding NATO.

As fifth-largest military power in the victorious alliance of the Second World War, Canada had an influential voice in international affairs. Our small, highly respected diplomatic corps skilfully pursued an independent foreign policy. Canada had played a leading role in founding the United Nations in 1945. It led again in the creation of NATO. Canadians helped draft the Washington Treaty and argued successfully for an article allowing non-military co-operation.

During the 40 years of the Cold War, Canada contributed substantial land and air forces to NATO, including an army brigade and an air division. In the early 1950s, a full fighter wing of the Royal Canadian Air Force provided a large share of NATO's front-line air defence capability. Canada reduced its commitment to NATO in 1969, but it maintained smaller forces in Europe until our last contingents withdrew in 1994 following the end of the Cold War.

The most successful military alliance in history, NATO helped avoid the ultimate catastrophe — a thermonuclear superpower conflict. It provided the security shield behind which Europe began its integration process. With that mission fulfilled, the question arose: what role now for the Alliance?

The answer came quickly. After the Soviet Union's collapse in 1990, two-power confrontation gave way to smaller, violent conflicts. NATO — which has just admitted three new members from the former

east bloc (the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland) — provides an essential stabilizing force. In the former Yugoslavia, it serves as an armed instrument of international peacemaking.

Consistent with our position that NATO must be more than a military alliance, Canada has cultivated non-military links, initiating and then promoting the post-Cold War reform of NATO's Science Program. Canada has also encouraged the Alliance to play a part in addressing human security issues: NATO troops in Bosnia are actively involved in demining. And the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council is looking at ways NATO and its partners can help reduce the problems caused by small arms proliferation.

In other words, there is still a lot to do for the cause of peace and stability, and Canada intends to be a full-fledged player in this endeavour. ●



photo: Allen Macartney