



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 51/16 CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES: NEIGHBOURS
AND ALLIES

An address by the Deputy Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. Escott Reid, delivered to the Opening Meeting of the Conference on Canadian-American Affairs, at the University of Maine, on April 19, 1951.

On August 24, 1949, less than two years ago, a fundamental change took place in the relations between Canada and the United States. Before that day we had been good neighbours. On that day we became allies - I hope good allies. For on August 24, 1949, the North Atlantic Treaty came into force. We had been partners in the development of a continent - North America. We now became partners in the defence of a civilization - the North Atlantic community.

Twice in the previous generation we had found ourselves, after a world war had broken out, fighting side by side in a temporary coalition. Now we found ourselves in peacetime in an alliance set up not to win a world war which had already broken out but to prevent a world war from breaking out.

For both of us this constituted a revolutionary change in foreign policy. We North Americans had resolutely refused up to 1949 to enter in peacetime into a military alliance either with each other or with any other country. In Canada we had, for example, special links with Great Britain but we were under no legal obligation to send troops overseas to help Great Britain if Great Britain became involved in war. You in the United States had special relations with us in Canada but you were under no obligation to come to our aid when we became involved in war overseas in 1914 and 1939.

What caused us both in 1949 to make this revolutionary change in our foreign policies?

The cause was the remorseless expansion of Soviet power in Europe by methods of direct and indirect aggression culminating in the seizure of Czechoslovakia in February 1948 by the forces of Cominform imperialism. It was the seizure of Czechoslovakia which finally convinced the governments and peoples of Western Europe and of North America that the time had come to put a stop to the further expansion of Russian power in Western Europe, since if Russia were allowed to continue to pick off its victims one by one, a third world war would become inevitable and defeat in that war probable. It was therefore essential to make clear to the Russians that any further aggression by them in Western Europe would mean war against the whole North Atlantic community.