

INTRODUCTION

World order is a critical issue on today's international agenda. Once again Canadian and other public figures and diplomats are facing a rapidly changing world and contemplating how best to manage it. They are watching the upheaval in the Soviet Union, trying to come to grips with major developments in the remainder of Europe, discussing modifications in Western defence arrangements, and considering greater reliance on the United Nations for the promotion of global stability. Many UN members sent military forces recently to the Persian Gulf to turn back Iraq's invasion and occupation of Kuwait, and so participated in a major effort to uphold and strengthen the international system by firm resistance to aggression.

This is a time to consider what Canada and other UN members can now do to uphold world order and promote international peace and security. We need to take stock of Canada's position and standing in the world, and to reflect on the possibilities that lie before this country for influencing the march of events. Canada has a long-standing interest in international peace and security and well-established connections through such bodies as NATO and the United Nations. This country will surely want to play its full part in the important international endeavours that now lie ahead.

In doing so, we should not forget that Canada has been actively involved in the quest for world stability, peace and order for a good fifty years. The work on current international structures began in the thick of the Second World War in an exercise known as Post Hostilities Planning; and continued over the next few years as discussions focussed on a new United Nations system. Canada was a founding member and active supporter of the new global organization, and looked to it in the immediate Post-War period as the keystone of a new international security system.

The more ambitious hopes for the United Nations were soon disappointed owing to the rapidly growing rift between the Soviet Union and the Western world. This paralyzed the Security Council. The UN action in Korea in the early 1950s was an exception to the rule occasioned by Soviet withdrawal for a brief time from Security Council decision-making. Henceforth - until the Persian Gulf crisis of 1990-91 - United Nations military action in attempts to uphold order or contain regional disputes was largely focussed on the new device of peacekeeping. Canada has played a full role in that endeavour, serving with the great majority of UN and similar peacekeeping missions.

With the dissipation of the original hopes for the United Nations, Canada's attention turned to alternative arrangements. Together with the United States and several West European countries, Canada participated in the establishment, in the late-1940s, of the North Atlantic Treaty and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Set up in 1949, this new system was designed to reassure Western Europe about its security; guarantee the defence of the North Atlantic area; reaffirm democratic ideals among the member states; and promote well-being and a sense of community.

The North Korean invasion of the South in June 1950, prompted fears that the Soviet Union and international Communism were becoming militantly expansionist. This not only triggered a collective military response in Korea; it also raised concerns about the security of other regions including Western Europe. Collective defence arrangements in Europe were accordingly strengthened, and over the next year a Canadian infantry brigade and twelve squadrons of aircraft were sent to Europe to join other allied forces there.