

*North Atlantic Treaty*

I went on to say:

The security council was given primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security in order to ensure prompt and effective action by the United Nations. But the experience of the past nine months can scarcely be said to have demonstrated that the security council would be capable, under its present practices and procedures of taking prompt and effective action.

And further:

In the unsettled state of the world, which is the inevitable aftermath of the war, circumstances or disputes may be expected to arise where it would be important that the security council should be capable of taking prompt and effective action for the maintenance of peace and security. In such circumstances we would all like to feel that the council would be ready and able to take effective action promptly and not after a dispute or source of friction was fanned into a conflagration; that it would not wait until it is necessary to resort to force or until men, desperate from the frustration of waiting for a decision, might take whatever action they thought apt to serve their own interests.

That warning was applauded, but got very little beyond applause. The next year, when the succeeding meeting was held, speaking again for the Canadian delegation on September 18, 1947, I made, among other remarks, the following:

There is a growing feeling in my country, as in other countries, that the United Nations, because of the experience of the security council, is not showing itself equal to the discharge of its primary task of promoting international confidence and ensuring national security. The economic and social council is functioning fairly successfully. The specialist organizations are doing good work. But the security council, founded on what is called the unanimity of its permanent members, has done little to strengthen the hopes of those who saw in it the keystone of the structure of peace. It has done much to deepen the fears of those who felt that, with the veto, it could not operate effectively in an international atmosphere of fear and suspicion, where pride is often allowed to take precedence over peace, and power over reason.

I went on:

Nations, in their search for peace and co-operation, will not and cannot accept indefinitely an unaltered 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 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. Such associations, it has already been pointed out, if consistent with the principles and purposes of the charter, can be formed within the United Nations. It is to be hoped that such a development will not be necessary. If it is unnecessary, it will be most undesirable. If, however, it is made necessary, it will have to take place.

Let us not forget that the provisions of the charter are a floor under, rather than a ceiling over, the responsibilities of member states. If some prefer to go even below that floor, others need not be prevented from moving upwards.

Two or more apartments in the structure of peace are undoubtedly less desirable than one family of nations dwelling together in amity, undivided by

[Mr. St. Laurent.]

curtains, or even more substantial pieces of political furniture. They are however to be preferred to the alternative of wholly separate structures.

This, you may say, is defeatism of the worst kind. It is not. It is merely sober realism.

During the months which followed there had been disturbing developments in eastern Europe, and very disturbing developments in the security council. These had been and were continuing to be demonstrations of the fact that the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and their satellites did not intend nor expect the United Nations to perform any useful function, unless it were the function of enabling them to extend their influence and domination. Everything else was blocked by the veto. Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Roumania, Yugoslavia, and then Czechoslovakia and many others, had seen their free democratic institutions ruthlessly crushed out of existence. Methods which had succeeded in those countries were being resorted to in Greece, in Italy and in France; and the upholders of genuine democracy were seeing with alarm that chaos being fostered and extended in their countries as an organ to bring about the kind of constitutional changes of which we have seen so many terrible and consequential examples.

This fateful march of events had made it unmistakably clear that the soviet union was a threat to peace and security—directly, or according to the size of its armed forces, and indirectly, by its support of communist parties in countries which had not yet been driven into the soviet orbit.

Its record of international co-operation for peace was a bleak one. Ever since the San Francisco conference the soviet union has insisted that all measures for assuring and enforcing peace should be agreed to in the first instance by the security council in which it has a veto. It has refused to participate in almost all the international organizations set up under the aegis of the United Nations. It has refused to join the food and agricultural organization, the international refugee organization, the international labour organization, UNESCO, the international monetary fund, the international civil aviation organization, and the proposed international trade organization. It had spurned almost all the organizations set up for international co-operation in which it could not use the veto.

Meanwhile it had given its own unique meaning to the concept of defence through the methods of indirect aggression; and one has only to look at what happened in Czechoslovakia to realize how effective those methods can be, even in a sincerely democratic country.