

CANADIAN EXTERNAL POLICY 1946-1952

An Analysis by Professor F.H. Soward

Throughout the period under review, in contrast to pre-war days, Canada has been willing to play a positive and constructive rôle in international affairs, based upon the general appreciation that isolationism was impossible and the resulting belief in the necessity for the development of a firm structure of international organization. Such a policy has been reflected in our attitude at meetings of the United Nations and particularly in the steps which led to the creation of NATO. At the outset it was hoped that the principle of functionalism, as expressed by Mr. King in 1943, would find adequate recognition in international affairs. As this has not been the case, we have ceased to lay stress upon such a principle, realizing as well that recognition as a middle power also involves embarrassing and sometimes unwelcome responsibilities. Canadian policy has seldom had to be concerned with status as was the case in the twenty years between wars, the major exception of concern with fitting recognition being displayed in the repeated protests over Great Power domination in the attempt to draft a treaty with Germany. The administration of Canadian policy has been much less hampered by the necessity for preserving unity within Canada because of the greater solidarity and unanimity of public opinion. A continuing limiting factor has been the necessity to maintain the armed forces on a voluntary basis. Where domestic considerations have acted as a deterrent in formulating the policy desired by the Department, they have usually arisen from religious or anti-communist considerations. These have left their mark on such questions as the grant of aid, economic or military, to Yugoslavia, the recognition of Communist China, and the exchange of missions with Spain and the Holy See.

2. Because of waning confidence in the possibility of organizing collective security between 1946 and 1948, Canadian emphasis shifted to the development of regional security in the North Atlantic region, the area of most immediate concern to Canada. The active part taken by Canada in creating NATO reflected the driving impetus resulting from alarm at the menace of Soviet imperialism, appreciation of the value to Canada of having the United States and the United Kingdom co-operating in a common defence policy in the same region, and the importance to Canada of Western Europe. In shaping this policy in 1948 there was insufficient emphasis upon the cost to Canada of playing its full part in creating what was publicly described as the "overwhelming preponderance of moral, economic, and military force". Difficulties since then of achieving a satisfactory policy of mutual aid and in expanding the Canadian defence appropriations have been fortunately lessened by the continued public alarm at the threat of war. This concern has intensified the dilemma in NATO of short-term military considerations far outweighing the long-term economic and social objectives. At the outset Canada stressed the importance of NATO as the "dynamic counter-attraction to totalitarian communism", and indicated