

The President of France

Here, in 1949, was ratified the North Atlantic pact, which unites our two countries and ten others more intimately than ever before in time of peace. Here, measures are now being enacted that are considered necessary to deal with the new threat to our common civilization and heritage. Here, too, ways are being discussed to avoid a new conflict that neither France nor Canada is seeking but for which we mean to be ready if it should become unavoidable.

(Text):

You are visiting Canada, sir, at a difficult time in the history of our two countries—a difficult time in the life of free men all over the world. We had set high hopes on the United Nations organization as an instrument of peaceful co-operation among men and governments of good will; we still hope there are in the world enough men and women of good will to assure the ultimate triumph of those high purposes. Unfortunately, one of the great powers bent on extending the domination of its dictatorial masters has constantly worked to spread among its people, and among the peoples already under its domination, distrust, fear and unfriendliness toward their fellow men. This it is which has made it necessary for us to join together to build up our own military forces, not for aggressive purposes but to deter aggression by a firm demonstration of our capacity to overcome it if necessary.

You come to us, sir, after spending a few days in the United States of America. You cannot fail to have been impressed by the strength of that great country, and also by the sincerity of the peaceful aspirations of all its people. Here in Canada you will not fail to note the close, friendly relations which bind us to our southern neighbours, and also the untrammelled independence we enjoy in our own land. If our frontiers bordered on those of some grasping imperialistic neighbouring state, we might not have this opportunity of welcoming you in a free parliament as the distinguished and respected head of a free France. Canada is, I think, the best evidence, permanent and historic evidence, of the peaceful purposes of the United States.

These confident, friendly and co-operative international relations which we enjoy with our great southern neighbours we wish to share ultimately with the whole world, and in the meantime we expect to share them with all the nations of the north Atlantic community. We know we can count upon the people of France, and we wish to assure you the people of France can count upon the good will and effective co-operation of all the people of Canada.

(Translation):

I know that you share our convictions as to the means of warding off the danger which threatens us. This means is none other than the pooling of our forces in the face of any possibility of aggression and of any attempted domination or even intimidation.

As I have just pointed out, our generation has twice already seen Canadian soldiers fight as brothers-in-arms with French soldiers. Thousands of them rest side by side in the vast cemeteries of France.

It was not only your homeland that our Canadian soldiers went to defend, it was also their own, their physical as well as their spiritual homeland. Similarly, your own soldiers fought for an ideal greater than the defence of French territory. Neither you nor we could watch with indifference the fate of the glorious heritage which they preserved for us at the cost of their lives. Without a doubt, we wish to do everything possible to prevent a new disaster from sweeping down on our peoples, but we shall never give up the right to defend ourselves; we shall never try to escape the duty of helping to defend those who, like yourselves, are more immediately exposed than we.

Upon your return home, you may tell your compatriots that here in Canada you have met men of good will, a people anxious not only to prevent the iron curtain from falling on the shores of the Atlantic, but eager to ensure that the tricolour shall ever wave in the air of freedom, because the Canadian people realize that the free world would no longer be free if ever France or the Europe from which our ancestors came should lose their freedom.

Ladies and gentlemen, Monsieur Vincent Auriol, President of the French republic.

His Excellency Vincent Auriol (President of the French republic): Mr. Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker of the Senate, Mr. Speaker of the House of Commons, gentlemen: My heart is deeply touched with emotion and pride.

I realize the full significance for France of the warmth of your greetings, the acclamations of your people, the supreme honour you have done us in officially welcoming us in the imposing edifice of your parliament, and, finally, of the eloquence of the words just spoken.

I am fully aware of the value of this symbol: the President of the French republic bringing to Canada the affectionate message