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THE ATLANTIC COMMUNITY

An address by the Secretary of State
for External Affairs, Mr. L.B. Pearson,
to the English Speaking Union, London,
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It has long been an agreeable and innocent diversion to the student of history to observe man's curious blindness to important and even revolutionary events in the contemporary scene. Almost any age - certainly including our own - provides numerous examples to give us that curious but common pleasure known as wisdom after the event.

At the very moment when Aristotle was designing the best possible constitution and economy for the City-State, his most renowned student, through his conquest of the civilized world, was making the City-State concept of Society obsolete. Long after the time when the introduction of gunpowder had completely changed the facts of war, moated castles continued to be built throughout Europe, even though their interest had become more picturesque than strategic. Early in the 19th century, as I recall, there were grave misgivings in England concerning the increasingly acute shortage of boxwood, with which alone the hubs of stage coach wheels could be satisfactorily made: this at the time when a network of railways was beginning to spread throughout the country. You will remember, too, that as late as 1917 in the First World War, the Allied Command kept in readiness a division or so of cavalry for the break-through to Berlin, yet one would have thought that by 1917 it would have been evident that cavalry, although continuing to give "an air of distinction to what would otherwise have been disorderly brawl", had largely gone the way of the crossbow and the muzzle-loader. In our own day, it is probable that none of us can fully apprehend the implications for war or peace of the release of atomic energy. A century or so hence, historians, if there still are any left, may wonder at our astonishing shortsightedness.

The fact is that man's inherently conservative nature, and his tendency to think in wishful terms not infrequently blinds him to developments which are bound to bring about the most profound and unsettling transformations to his familiar world. That is one reason why it is so hard to bring political action into line with those developments.

Today, for instance, we may not have fully realized the changes that have occurred which render obsolete many of our old concepts of national sovereignty and which, on the other hand, make essential the growth and acceptance of the idea of supra-national association: changes which require that we give priority to interdependence over independence.

Security, peace and ordered progress call for action on a wider basis than that of the national community. This does not mean, however, that we should move at once into world government or some form of atlantic union or broad political federation with a central legislature and executive, a common citizenship, currency, and budget, a single foreign policy and defence establishment under central control: in short, with all the institutions of a federal state.

Those who advocate such schemes of federation do so from the highest of motives. They perform, I think, a good and useful service in preparing public opinion for the political changes which will undoubtedly be called for in the future to promote international cooperation. As a practising and, I hope, practical politician, however, as well as a quondam student of political science, I confess that I sometimes find some of the blueprints of the brave new international world so far removed from the possibilities of the present that it is difficult to consider them in realistic terms. Our ultimate destiny - to safeguard our very existence - may require some form of federalism on a regional or even a wider basis. But meanwhile we have to work with the institutions which exist today and attempt to adapt them for the more ready and efficient and equitable solution of our current problems. This is, I suggest, a necessary and practicable task, and the insistent demand for something more far-reaching to be achieved immediately may at times be an obstacle to its accomplishment. In any event, the formal surrender of sovereignty, in its old form, is not now so decisive an issue as the provision of a new assurance through adequate international measures that power, traditionally the main attribute of sovereignty, will not be used for wrong purposes and against the general interest. The decisive factors, therefore, are those which determine policy: above all, which bring about a sound and sensible public opinion which alone makes it possible for democratic governments to adopt sound and sensible policies: or should the sequence be reversed?

Power, in the sense of capacity to wage nuclear war against another nuclear state, or on the other hand, to abandon the rest of the world and retire into complete isolation without disastrous economic consequences, is now, in practice, limited to two or three states. Even with those, the consequences of nuclear victory would be about as disastrous as those of nuclear defeat.

Realization of this fact has put an effective curb upon the freedom of choice and, therefore, the sovereignty of even the super-states. The concept of power-balance has given way to the doctrine of nuclear deterrent. Even the Soviet Union, rather belatedly, seems to have realized that it is not entirely free to throw its atomic weight around and, making a virtue out of necessity, is offering us 'peaceful co-existence'.

If the great have been limited in this way, how much less freedom of choice remains for smaller states. Indeed, whatever power these states now have can perhaps be most effectively used by the influence they may exert, either alone or even more in association with others, on the policy of the super-power. I suppose, in essence, that - and fear - are the main reasons which now hold coalitions of free states, such as NATO, together.

Smaller and newer states are often more sensitive about their sovereign rights even than larger and older ones. That is understandable. If a smaller power were not jealous of what it has, it soon might not have anything. And it is not surprising if a country which has only recently gained freedom and sovereignty is not as aware as an older state should be of the limitations, as well as the responsibilities, of that freedom.

I do not suggest, of course, that nationalism should not find expression in political freedom until these limitations and responsibilities are sure to be accepted. Nevertheless, if they have any sense of political or economic reality, smaller powers must recognize that isolation or neutralism or whatever they may call it, is today not likely to get them very far in controlling their own destinies. It is primarily by working with others that smaller countries can exercise influence on the big decisions by the big powers which so largely determine their own fate. This should strengthen their belief in international co-operation and international organization. It may also make them insistent on a voice and authority within this co-operation and these organizations, in the effort to recapture some of the control over their own fortunes which they may once have possessed but a large part of which, it must be admitted, most of them have now lost. While this is true, the atom bomb has also

become itself a leveller even among those states that possess it. It has for instance, because of its total destructive effects for which there is no adequate defence, made military superiority almost meaningless and armament races irrelevant. As Mr. L. L. White has put it in his wise little book EVERYMAN LOOKS FORWARD:

"The bomb has exploded the concept of quantity in the military field. Belief in military power may continue as a comforting conviction, just as men still believe in gold and move it carefully from place to place. But the real contest for supremacy will meantime be carried on in the field of policy and ideas.

"With the discovery of the bomb, power itself has become powerless before the will of a few. The human mind, by discovering prodigious destructive power within an ounce of mineral has recovered its mastery over quantity. From 1600 to 1945 physical power grew in arrogance, and policy often became the servant of the needs of power. But the bomb has burst the myth of power. It is policy not power, human motive not quantity, which is ultimately decisive in human affairs.

"To be a great power no longer means to be secure. Small nations have never been secure, nor will great nations be so in the future unless their policy is wise. Competition in military strength may continue, but it will no longer dominate world politics. Those who have no policy are at a loss, and have to do some hard thinking.

"While power was dominant, those who lacked an adequate policy could sit back and blame power-politics. But now the bluff of power has been called, and the choice is race-suicide or race-policy. Can it be that the future lies with those who can best think?"

It surely does not take much hard thinking to come to the conclusion that in their own interest, nation states should work together toward supra-national communities.

Such communities can grow in different ways and from different sources. Our Commonwealth of Nations, for instance, has evolved from an imperial centre through the transformation of colonial dependencies into free states who have chosen to remain in political association with each other and with the parent state. Evolution without revolution has been of unique value not only to the nations

most directly concerned, but to the world at large. That world should not forget what it owes to the United Kingdom for originating and directing this process -- which, of course, has not been completed. I can assure you that Canada is happy about its position in the Commonwealth and has no desire to see that position weakened. To us it means independence to which something else has been added.

The Commonwealth has never been a static association. It has been able to adapt itself to changing conditions and thereby influence those conditions. In recent years its value has increased, and taken on a new significance, by the membership of India, Pakistan and Ceylon, and by the steady move toward qualification for such membership of other Asian and African political groups.

In this way the Commonwealth provides a bridge -- at a time when there are all too few of them, and when they are desperately needed -- a bridge between Asia and the West.

Another impulse to international community development comes from the realization by contiguous nations, with shared political ideas and traditions and interests, that they would be much more adequately equipped to face the political and economic problems, and exploit the political and economic possibilities of today if they could remove the boundaries and barriers between them: in short, become integrated.

The contemporary illustration of this trend which first springs to mind is, of course, the move toward European unity. It is a move which must surely commend itself first of all to Europeans themselves, who must remember best how much their continent has suffered from disunity; more especially from the tragic feud over the centuries between Gaul and Teuton. The movement will also, I believe, be welcomed by non-Europeans of good will - this certainly includes Canadians - who see in it not merely the strengthening of the shield against aggression from the East, but also a more solid foundation for the prosperity and progress of the united peoples of Western Europe who are such a vital part of the Atlantic community. I hasten to add, however, that as a strong believer in the freest possible kind of international trade, Canada's approval of the economic aspects of European integration, without which I suppose the political could not take place, is given on the assumption that in this case the whole, while greater, could not be higher, more restrictive, than its parts. I am thinking of restrictions in the way of trade, of course, about which a country which exports as Canada does, about one-third of its gross national product takes a somewhat

jaundiced view, one which would be fully understood by a country like the United Kingdom which has flourished and grown great by its commerce with all parts of the world.

We should, I think, favour European unity for another reason. Western Europe has great resources of wisdom, strength and energy which, along with its traditions of freedom and culture, qualify it to play a powerful and constructive part today in world affairs. It can play this part most effectively, if the area of united or at least closely coordinated political action is enlarged.

This enlargement therefore is something which, I think, we should encourage and support, without -- and I am talking now about North Americans -- being too insistent in our advice as to how it should be done, or becoming too impatient if it is not done overnight. After all, as Mr. Bulganin reminded us last week, 'Moscow was not built in a day'. I do not myself see anything in this move to European unity which should hinder in any way the growth and coming-together of the Atlantic community. Quite the contrary. Nor do I see anything necessarily inconsistent between the closest possible association of the United Kingdom with this European development, and the maintenance and even strengthening of its ties with the rest of the Commonwealth.

I appreciate, of course, that while this country is part of Europe - history provides grim as well as glorious reminders of that connection - it has also a wider destiny and wider interests. The world owes much - some states indeed owe their very existence - to the fact that the vision of the British people has ranged across the oceans as well as across the channel. I do not forget this debt when I express the hope that this country, so rich in political sagacity, so steeped in political experience, and which has provided Europe with imaginative leadership more than once in history, will play an active and constructive part in the efforts now being made by European states to adapt themselves to new conditions which require their closer association. Such a part would represent an important contribution to the development of something more important and far-reaching even than European unity itself - namely the Atlantic community.

I see in that community three essential parts: a North America which must not lapse into continentalism; a Europe whose free and democratic countries must achieve the greatest possible unity, both for defence and development and to ensure that no one of them will dominate the others; and finally, the United Kingdom, the bridge between the two, linked to Europe indissolubly by many ties and perhaps, above all, by the complete disappearance of the Channel in the

air-atomic age; but linked also to North America in a unique way, because that continent - I hope that I will not be misunderstood in putting it this way - is now occupied by two former English-speaking colonies; one of which is proud to retain its political and monarchical association with the 'Old Master'.

We have now laid the foundations of this Atlantic community in NATO. Indeed that may be the most important thing that we did when we signed in Washington seven years ago the treaty bringing this international organization into being. On the other hand, what we did then may prove to have been as insubstantial and ephemeral as the signatures attached to many an international agreement which at the time seemed a veritable Magna Charta, but whose very name can now be found only in some doctrinal thesis. The near future will tell. There is no assurance yet that NATO will survive the emergency that gave it birth. That emergency was itself born of the fear - for which there was sufficient evidence - that unless the Atlantic countries united their resources and their resolve to defend themselves, they might succumb to aggression one by one. It seemed clear when the NATO Pact was signed, even to the mightiest power, that national security could not be guaranteed by national action alone. So we built up our collective defences and by our unity and strength have made NATO into a most effective deterrent against aggression. In doing so we have removed the greatest temptations to aggression: disunity and weakness.

If however, international tension now seems to ease, and the threat of direct military attack to recede, the fear which brought NATO into being in the first place will also recede; and the temptation to relax our defence efforts and indulge in the luxury of dissension and division will increase.

We may, in fact, be approaching a period - if, indeed, we are not in it - when NATO will lose much of the cohesive force which has hitherto held it together. There are those who are counting on this loss being fatal to the whole concept of NATO and the Atlantic community.

These dangers must be faced. Defence strength and unity must be maintained, yet we may not now have for this purpose the same incentive which we have had before. We must, therefore, develop a stronger bond of unity than a common fear. As the challenge of the Communists nations to our free institutions takes new forms, avoiding tactics and policies which risk nuclear devastation, NATO should in its turn, while maintaining whatever collective military defensive strength is necessary, develop new impulses for unity and community.

NATO cannot live on fear alone, nor can it become the source of a real Atlantic community if it remains organized to deal only with the military threat which first brought it into being. A new emphasis, therefore, on the non-military side of NATO's development is essential. It would also be the best answer to the Soviet charge that it is an aggressive, exclusively military agency, aimed against Moscow.

We are now faced by the challenge from the Communist bloc of competitive co-existence; or, to put it another way - of all conflict short of full scale war. This may be an improvement on the imminent possibility of nuclear devastation, but it is a long way from the security of co-operation co-existence and it has not removed the menace of Communist domination.

The NATO countries must find the answer to this new challenge; by demonstrating the quality and value and sincerity of their co-operation, between themselves, and with all members of the international community. We have here a new opportunity as well as a new challenge, and if we do not take advantage of it, speeches about the Atlantic community will, before long, have as little meaning as those about the lost continent of Atlantis. As the material and technological gap between the NATO countries and the Soviet bloc diminishes, it will be all the more important to maintain the distinctions in other and more important respects: and to ensure that these are more fully understood and valued.

This will require closer cooperation - political and economic - within NATO than has been the case; finding new ways by which we can build up and strengthen our own sense of community - and show others that what we are building is no selfish and exclusive way.

I hope that the meeting of the NATO Council later this week will find the answers to some of these questions. And begin a serious and practical search for the others. So it should be an important meeting, if not an easy one. At it we may find ourselves discussing policies rather than power; aims rather than arms; division rather than divisions.

NATO, in truth, is now at the crossroads of its existence. If it is to be forward, and in the right direction, it must concentrate on ways and means of bringing its members closer together politically, without weakening its defence unity and strength. For this purpose the Council must become a more effective agency for consultation and cooperation than it has been.

It must be given more authority and its meetings, with ministerial attendance, should be more frequent. Through the Council, consultation should be developed into an accepted custom, to the point where no member would think of taking action which affected the others in any substantial way - either politically or economically - without prior discussion with those members in NATO.

For this purpose I do not see the need for any substantial organizational changes or for any amendments to our treaty. Nor do I think that NATO should try to make special economic arrangements between its members or be charged with the duty of removing trade barriers. There are other international agencies which have been specially set up for this purpose - such as GATT and OEEC - and we do not want duplication. I doubt also whether NATO is the agency best equipped actually to provide aid to materially under-developed countries. In this matter, the United Nations should, I think, be brought more and more into the picture. I do not mean that the world organization should be the sole or even possibly the major executive agency for international aid or replace practical and successful operations like the Colombo Plan. Its special value would be to provide a forum where all assistance plans could be co-ordinated and policies discussed. I think also that the USSR should be encouraged to participate fully in such United Nations discussions. It would give us a very good opportunity to test the nature and the substance of her participation in this field of international economic assistance.

In political and economic consultation NATO's role, as I see it, is more limited, but more precise and politically more significant in that here discussions are between closely co-operating friends who are trying to bring about not merely the co-ordination, but the closest possible identity of plans and policies. As the mechanism for this process NATO can become the foundation for the Atlantic community of the future. It must in fact develop along these lines or it will drift into futility and may ultimately share the fate of other international agencies which disappeared because their roots were not deep enough for survival and growth.

May I close with a story, substituting only one or two words in the original, to fit this particular occasion:

"Making her debut at a NATO gathering, a young matron sat silently through a two hour discussion of the Atlantic community. Afterward, she thanked the women to whose spirited pros and cons she had listened.

"I'm awfully glad I came,' she said, 'because I was so terribly confused about the Atlantic community. Of course, she confessed, 'I'm still confused, but on a much higher plane.'"

If after my talk you are still confused, as you may well be, I dare to hope that it is at least confusion on a higher plane.

s/c