

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 65/7

CANADA AND THE ATLANTIC COMMUNITY

An Address by the Honourable Paul Martin,
Secretary of State for External Affairs, to the
Cleveland Council on World Affairs, Cleveland,
Ohio, U.S.A., on March 4, 1965.

It is now some 16 years since the Atlantic Alliance came into being. It was formed in response to a specific challenge. The nature of that challenge may have altered. Its impact has certainly been blunted. But I do not think there is anyone who would argue that the challenge as such has disappeared. I take it, therefore, as the starting point of my remarks this evening, that the unity and integrity of the Alliance is something in which all of us continue to have a vital stake.

This is not a plea for immobility. Over the past decade and a half, there have been significant changes in the world environment in which the Alliance is operating. There have also been significant changes in the balance of strength within the Alliance itself. It is only natural that, if the Alliance is to continue as a dynamic partnership, the implications of some of these changes should find reflection in its arrangements. It is within those parameters that I see the current debate on the future of the Alliance.

The Canadian attitude to the Alliance has been shaped, as might be expected, by elements in our history and our experience as a nation. Twice in the past half century, Canadians have fought on European soil in the defence of our common freedom. I think it is fair to say that out of that experience Canada's international personality was born and our recognition that we had a continuing part to play in the world beyond our borders. We participated with the United States in the reconstruction of war-torn Europe. And when that continent was once again being threatened -- this time by Communist power -- we were among the founder members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The Atlantic world provides a natural frame of reference for Canada. While much of Canada's national life is influenced by contact and interchange with our powerful neighbour to the south, historic ties take us back across the Atlantic to Britain and France, our two founding nations. In this our historical evolution has been somewhat different from yours. For we have never wished to turn our backs on Europe and the realities of Canadian life have continued to this day to reflect our dual national heritage.

These are some of the reasons why Canada has always tended to look upon the Atlantic as a bridge and not as a line of division. That perspective is appropriate not only to our historical personality as I have tried to suggest. It also enables us to play our part as a responsible middle power with a greater measure of independence than we could reasonably expect to have in a purely continental context.

These may be regarded as peculiarly Canadian reasons for supporting the conception of a transatlantic community. But this is not to say that the conception has any less validity for our Atlantic partners. As regards our collective defence, it is surely self-evident, in this nuclear missile age of ours, that the continental approach provides neither a complete nor an effective answer. And, when we go on to consider that the challenge confronting us is not simply or solely military in nature, then I cannot see that it is sufficient for us to pool our military strength to meet that challenge. That is one reason why Canada has always attached great importance to the non-military aspects of co-operation within the Alliance and why we have looked upon the Atlantic Alliance as an instrument for bringing the Atlantic nations together in a community united as closely as possible in policy and in purpose.

As the Canadian Prime Minister put it when he opened the ministerial meeting of the NATO Council in Ottawa in May 1963:

"The Atlantic nations must come together in one Atlantic Community. The West cannot afford two such communities, a European one and a North American one, each controlling its own policies and each perhaps moving away from the other as the common menace recedes."

We welcome the resurgence of strength and self-confidence in Europe. That strength and self-confidence have added to the resilience of the Alliance and to our ability, as members of the Atlantic community, to play a constructive part in the world at large -- particularly in our relations with the developing world. By the same token, we should regret any reversion to a more restrictively national or continental approach to the tasks we share in common. That would not be in the Canadian interest and we do not think it would be in the wider interest of the Alliance as a whole.

I should like next to say something about the Canadian position on the various issues that face us in the realm of defence. Canadian policy, as it has evolved since the formation of the Alliance, has been based on three related elements:

- first, a contribution of ground, air and naval forces to Western Europe and the North Atlantic;
- second, a contribution to North American air defence through NORAD; and
- third, a contribution to international peace keeping through the United Nations.

Within this general framework, we have had to take cognizance of the high cost of maintaining a meaningful Canadian contribution in these areas in circumstances where the pace of technological development carries with it increasing hazards of obsolescence. We have, therefore, embarked on a programme which is designed to improve the flexibility and mobility of our forces and to lead to the progressive integration of the three armed services. The substance of that programme was set out in our Defence White Paper of 1964. Its object is to ensure the most effective use of our military resources in relation to the three basic elements which I have just mentioned.

As far as the future is concerned, there are a number of uncertainties looming on the horizon which we shall need to take into account and which will have a bearing on the balance we strike, at any given stage, in meeting our responsibilities in the North Atlantic area, in North American continental defence and in peace keeping under the United Nations.

In Europe, there has been a welcome improvement in the capacity of the Western European members of the Alliance to assume a greater share of the responsibility for the common defence effort. The Alliance is also engaged in a comprehensive defence review. While that review is still in progress, the results could have a bearing on the nature of the role of Canadian forces in the Western European theatre over the longer term. I want to make it quite clear, however, because there has been misinterpretation of the Canadian position in some quarters recently, that, in the absence of durable political settlements, we regard the continued participation of North American land and air power in the defence of Western Europe as both vital and inescapable. That is the position of the Canadian Government, although we cannot, of course, afford to shut our eyes to the implications of other points of view that are being put forward.

In North America Canadian defence, co-operation with the United States goes back nearly a quarter of a century, to the historic Ogdensburg Declaration of 1941. This co-operation was further consolidated in 1958 with the establishment of the North America Air Defence Command. Like yourselves, we are constantly reviewing how we can most effectively contribute to continental defence arrangements, given the declining threat of the manned bomber and the uncertainties surrounding anti-missile defence.

As regards peace keeping, Canada has been a major supporter of that conception as it has evolved in the United Nations over the past two decades. We look upon the evolution of that conception as reflecting the will and determination of the world community to work towards a peaceful and securely ordered world. We think it is both right and useful for the United Nations to be able, with the consent and at the invitation of its member states, to interpose its presence in situations of conflict or potential conflict - to hold the ring, as it were, until longer-term solutions can be worked out at the political level.

Canada has participated in every peace-keeping operation undertaken by the United Nations since 1948. We have set aside standby forces within our military establishment, to be at the disposal of the United Nations at

its request in situations of emergency. We took the initiative last autumn in convening a conference in Ottawa to enable countries with experience in United Nations peace-keeping operations to compare notes, to identify the technical problems that have been encountered, to pool their experience in meeting those problems and to see how, individually, we might improve our response to the United Nations in future situations requiring the services of an international force.

We are confronted at the moment with a situation in which the whole future peace-keeping capacity of the United Nations is at issue. We are giving that problem a very high priority and we shall do what we can to see that it is resolved without detriment to the part the United Nations has played and must continue to play in the maintenance of world peace and security.

I turn next to the nuclear arrangements within the Alliance. The basic problem which is facing us here, as I see it, is how to adjust those arrangements to the changed conditions of today. Put in practical terms, the problem is how we can achieve a greater sharing in the military direction (which is to say, in the nuclear strategy) of the Alliance without further proliferation of control over the use of nuclear weapons.

One way of tackling this problem has been the suggested creation of a Multilateral Nuclear Force. While we appreciate the reasons for the MLF proposals, we decided, in the light of our other commitments, not to take part in the discussions on this force. More recently, the British Government has put forward proposals for a somewhat more broadly-based Atlantic Nuclear Force comprising nuclear forces already in being as well as those still in the planning stage. Proposals which have as their basis an inherent Atlantic conception and which relate to forces in being, thereby possibly affecting Canadian forces on both sides of the Atlantic, are naturally of more direct interest to us. We believe that discussions on any new nuclear arrangements should be held in the NATO forum on as broad a basis as possible. We also welcome the indication by the United States of its willingness to consider proposals that meet the legitimate needs of other NATO countries. We, for our part, have suggested that one approach could be to take a fresh look at existing NATO machinery and existing nuclear arrangements, such as those agreed to at the NATO meeting in Ottawa in May of 1963, to identify those areas where progress may be possible towards achieving a broader basis of participation in strategic planning and the nuclear decisions of the Alliance.

Perhaps I can best summarize the Canadian position in this matter as follows:

First, we acknowledge the claims of the European members of NATO to a greater and more equitable degree of participation in the nuclear arrangements of the Alliance.

Second, we regard it as axiomatic that any new arrangements arrived at should add to the strength of the Alliance and not contribute to division within it. In particular, of course, we should be deeply disturbed by any situation in which there was an irretrievable cleavage between France and her NATO partners, given the very important character of France's contribution to the Alliance.

Third, we think that, if such arrangements are not to prove divisive, they must be open to all members of the Alliance.

Fourth, no final decisions should be taken on these important issues until there has been full consultation in the NATO forum where all points of view can be heard.

I should now like to return to my point of departure, which was that, as long as the threat of aggression in a divided Europe continued, the need for an Alliance such as ours was as compelling as ever. But I also said that this was not a plea for immobility. I believe that the time has come for us to take a fresh look at our partnership and to see whether it reflects the many and fundamental changes that have occurred within the Alliance and in the world around us.

The world of 1965 is not the world of 1949. There has been the resurgence of political and economic strength in the countries of Western Europe. There have been the beginnings of a broader unity of purpose and endeavour among some of these countries. In the Soviet world, too, there have been changes. It is no longer anything like the monolithic entity it was at one time. There has been an element of reassertion of national identity and national interest in the countries of Eastern Europe. There has also been the growing rift between the Soviet Union and China. The Soviet Union itself is facing many of the problems and responsibilities that go with great-power status and great-power commitments in a changing world. And beyond Europe there is a whole new constellation of nations which have emerged to independence, nations with staggering problems of poverty and under-development, nations with very different priorities and preoccupations from our own, but nations, in the final analysis, to whose stability and success in solving their problems the continued maintenance of world peace and security will not be unrelated.

I am encouraged by the fact that the Alliance is facing up to the need to take a fresh look at itself. That process was formally launched last December, when NATO ministers directed the Permanent Council to study the state of the Alliance and the purposes and objectives commonly accepted by all members. I do not wish to prejudge the results of this important exercise. I should like, however, to put two specifically Canadian glosses on it, one regarding the means and the other regarding the ends of the exercise.

Canadians are pragmatists. We are by nature inclined to build upon what has been found useful in the past. This does not mean that we are not ready to consider new departures. But we should want to be reasonably sure, before we strike out in new directions, that this is the best way to proceed towards the objectives we share in common.

As to the future shape of the Atlantic Community, I have tried to suggest that the challenge that is facing us today is a good deal more subtle and sophisticated than the challenge which faced us when our Alliance was formed 16 years ago. This has an obvious bearing on our response. We must not forget that we have at our command immense resources and immense strength.

We also must not forget that, if we are to make the impact which we have it within our power to make, those resources and that strength must be directed to furthering the cause of peace and freedom and well-being in the world. Within those broader objectives, there is surely adequate room for each and every one of us to make our individual and distinctive contribution. But it is important that our purposes and our policies should be in harmony and that we should each be prepared to subordinate some part of our national interest to the general interest of the Alliance as a whole. That, in the Canadian view at least, is the essence of the conception of an Atlantic Community.

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