



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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THE NATURE OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC
COMMUNITY

(An address delivered by the Permanent Representative of Canada to the North Atlantic Council, Mr. A.D.P. Heeney, at the Atlantic Community Conference, Oxford, September 10, 1952.)

...This Conference...is addressing itself to a great, an urgent task of popular education. It seeks to strengthen our community by the only lasting means by which it can be made to endure -- by making our objectives and our arrangements for attaining them better known among our peoples, by promoting among us a better knowledge of each other and of the contributions each has to make to the steady achievement of the objects we have set ourselves.

It is all very well for us, your servants and the representatives of your governments, to meet solemnly in Paris, in the Palais de Chaillot, and to call ourselves the North Atlantic Council. It is all very well, and no doubt essential for us to pass resolutions and establish committees and working groups and to sign protocols and to issue statements. It is all very well, too, for our statesmen to make eloquent and inspiring speeches about the North Atlantic community -- perhaps, indeed, we could do with more of these things just now. But, because we are free peoples, these things are not enough. There must be a wide and solid base in public opinion and conviction, if our association is to survive and to develop. If the citizens of our fourteen countries are not seized of the reasonableness and righteousness of what we are doing, they will not long sustain their governments in a course which involves so much effort and sacrifice on the part of all.

Now I suppose...to take advantage of the opportunity...to make a few personal observations on the nature of this association of nations that we call the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. What manner of institution is this NATO, or "OTAN" as it is beginning to be called in Paris? Well, in the first place it is, of course, an alliance for defence against a military threat. But is it more than that -- a political institution of some new kind? A first step toward a federation or confederation of states? Have we in NATO the beginnings of a genuine community of peoples?

Not long ago I heard a distinguished soldier provide a very brief answer to the question (which he himself had put to his audience) of how NATO could succeed in its first objective of providing an effective defence against the disaster which overhangs the free world. It is really very simple, he said. All that is necessary is for the fourteen representatives of the governments comprising the North Atlantic Council to have the political and moral courage to take the necessary decisions!

It seemed to me that this answer, whether given with tongue in cheek or otherwise, illustrates, if in somewhat extreme fashion, a quite basic, and, I think dangerous misunderstanding of the nature of the present Organization. For the fact is, of course, that the North Atlantic Council has no authority whatever to take the kind of decisions my military friend was talking about. And, did each of us fourteen permanent representatives possess even that high level of courage which he himself has so often displayed in battle, it would avail us little in the attainment of the objectives which we, equally with him, would have NATO achieve.

There is nothing to be gained by failure to recognize and appreciate the extraordinary complexity of what we are trying to do in NATO, or by under-estimating the difficulties. We are a voluntary organization of fourteen sovereign states. It is, I believe, quite strictly accurate to say that none of us have given up one single element of our sovereignty. The Prime Minister of this country made it abundantly clear in the House of Commons the other day that the United Kingdom Government had not abdicated its right to make decisions. And the same is true of the rest of us. In fact, from this point of view, the North Atlantic Council is no more than a committee of national representatives whose individual and combined authority is strictly limited. This is not to say that the Council has no power; nor indeed that its authority may not develop by custom, even by law, as the alliance gains confidence and strength. But, for the moment, we can only proceed by unanimity and delegations and through the implementing action of our governments at home.

I must not, however, be led into what might well be an arid "constitutional" examination of my subject. The essence of NATO is not so much law or even political organization but the willingness of free governments supported by free peoples to work together. In so doing we can achieve the unanimity which is necessary to our decisions only by the adjustment of purely national interests to the interests of the whole alliance and by the national determination of national policies in the light of what is best in the judgment of our friends.

Another side of our Atlantic association where there is some confusion, it seems to me, is in the relation between what we call the Atlantic community and NATO. For, as I see it, the community and the Organization are neither the same nor co-extensive. Established originally by twelve nations for the primary purpose of providing for a united system of defence for the West, NATO has already expanded by a process of strategic and political logic to include fourteen. Who will say that there is some special magic in the present number? In terms of military strategy, there is of course a certain unity in the geographical area covered by the Treaty. But, even here, it is difficult to contend that our alliance is complete.

Think for a moment in terms other than defence. We have, from the beginnings of NATO, insisted, and rightly, that ours was no mere military alliance. Ours has to be an alliance of the mind and spirit -- no mere huddling together in the face of a common danger. Ours was to be, as well, a developing community of like-minded peoples committed to the cooperative strengthening of our free institutions, to the promotion of conditions of stability and well-being and to the encouragement of economic collaboration.

Now it is true, of course, that our fourteen nations have much in common beyond our determination to remain free

and to build up our strength to deter, and, if need be, to fight together against aggression. But, if it is difficult to delimit in terms of strategy the extent of our community, how much more difficult is it to set geographical boundaries to the spiritual community of free men?

I am not suggesting that there is no essential unity, no political or other logic in the present grouping of nations in NATO. Much less am I suggesting that NATO should put on a drive for new members! Of course the present composition of the alliance makes sense -- but it is primarily military sense at the present stage of events. All that I am trying to say is that we should remember that NATO does not comprise the whole community of free men. And we should look forward to the widening, as well as the deepening, of our association, particularly in those fields of endeavour associated with Article 2 of the Treaty which, in NATO parlance, have come to be known as the "non-military aspects".

In the comradeship of arms, NATO has already made solid progress towards the establishment of an Atlantic community. This sense of comradeship will, no doubt, spread gradually, but surely, into other fields. In a hundred different ways, economic and social and cultural co-operation will emerge. Unfortunately, up to now, it is not unfair to say that our preaching about this sort of co-operation has outrun our performance. There has been a lot of oratory, some of it pretty good oratory, about "the Atlantic community". But lip service never built a community. We need to act as well as to talk; and before we act, we must think. Nowhere, perhaps, have we need of more hard and discriminating thought than in our efforts to give substance to the undertakings we have given in Article 2 of the North Atlantic Treaty.

I am going to suggest to you tonight that we shall make our best progress toward the objectives stated in Article 2 if we are willing to look beyond the North Atlantic Organization for areas and opportunities of non-military collaboration. There is nothing in our Treaty to suggest that NATO is the only means by which we are to build our community. Quite the reverse. Indeed the adherence of all of us to the United Nations itself is reaffirmed in the very first article of the Treaty. Let me explain what I have in mind:

In building up our community, as good neighbours, we have many different jobs that must be done. We shall build most quickly and most surely if we use the right tool for the job in hand. There are already many tools available; we should seldom have to take time off to fashion new ones. This is specially true in the economic field where there are many well-oiled tools ready to our hands. If we, North Atlantic countries, want to co-operate in affairs of, say, civil aviation, we would not normally look to NATO in Paris; we should look to the International Civil Aviation Organization in Montreal. The fact that the membership of ICAO is wider than NATO is no disadvantage; indeed, it is a positive advantage, because we want our aeroplanes to fly all over the world. If we want to promote worldwide trade should we not more normally work together in the organization under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, GATT - rather than in NATO? If we have financial matters to discuss which run beyond the bounds of our membership, which has naturally been determined largely by the immediate needs of defence, should we not normally look to the International Bank and Fund?

Even in those economic affairs which affect North Atlantic countries most of all we may promote our ends through other organs as well as in NATO itself. The Organization for European Economic Cooperation is a well-established and efficient body, with a tried and able staff and with interests that, in many ways, are closely parallel with those of NATO. Many of us have welcomed the recent initiatives of the United Kingdom and United States Governments to ensure a fuller use of the OEEC for certain very important work that we have in NATO. Thus, at this minute, the OEEC is pressing forward with an examination of national economies which will provide the essential basis for NATO's annual review of build-up of forces. In fact, these two operations in OEEC and NATO have been planned by much the same people with an eye to maximum efficiency and minimum waste.

What I am suggesting is that, in other than military affairs, and particularly in economic, social and cultural matters, we members of NATO should try to co-operate, not solely, or even primarily, through the machinery of NATO when there are already in existence other international bodies with more appropriate organization and membership.

By no means do I intend to imply that, in this non-military field, there is no place for NATO. One very important activity of the Council, for instance, is that of "political consultation", the provision of an intimate, friendly forum where problems of foreign policy can be discussed; here substantial progress has been made, even in these past few weeks. Again, one should, I think, contemplate the possibility, under special circumstances and for particular purposes, of NATO considering problems normally within the sphere of other international bodies -- where, let us say, a stalemate has been reached and where discussions, in a group such as the North Atlantic Council with its continuous and wide-ranging contacts, might serve the common good. For in the NATO forum, with the Soviet menace ever actively present in our minds, there may well be a greater will and a greater willingness than elsewhere to press forward towards agreement. Therefore, while the opportunities for "non-military co-operation" may, in fact, be more frequent outside NATO than within, we must certainly not miss any chances that may arise inside. We who have been especially concerned with this vital element in our association are heartened by the frequent references to these matters by our Secretary-General. I have no doubt that, as time goes on we shall increasingly think of Article 2, not as a separate little treaty within the North Atlantic Treaty to be "implemented" by a particular branch of NATO, but as an attitude of mind enlightened and enlivening the work of the whole of our alliance and of other international bodies as well.

Here, I come back to what I said a while ago. NATO is not the North Atlantic community, neither is the North Atlantic community NATO. It seems to me that, with this distinction made, many things become clearer and many contradictions are resolved. We fourteen countries who presently make up NATO may be the beginning of the Atlantic community, we are certainly not the end of it.

So much for my reflections on the nature of our alliance and our community.

To many of you this must have seemed a pretty bleak summer for NATO. Speculation and public comment have given the impression that NATO was not fulfilling and would not fulfil its primary task of building up the force which could prevent a third world war. Now we all know that, from time to time,

we may fall short of the levels that we set ourselves. There are bound to be ups and downs in the progress of our partnership toward peace and security. But we cannot contemplate failure.

For this reason, we, the peoples of our fourteen nations, have need to be steadfast on our course. And, being free peoples we can only be steadfast if we know and accept the objectives we are asked to strive for. We must, as well, be able to understand the means. For, unlike those under Communist discipline, we will best endure and surmount the discomforts and burdens and deprivations of the long pull when our leaders take us into their confidence. Such gatherings as this can do incalculable service in bringing to those who have to pay the price of peace as well as was the reasonable basis for their steadfastness.

Let us remind ourselves, and remind ourselves often, of what manner of community we have set about to build. Especially, let us recall the things which bind us together. First of all, there is the past. For two thousand years and more, different members of our community have spun rich threads that are now woven into all our lives. Some have spun the threat of religion others of art and others of adventure over the seas that surround and unite us. Some have carried our commerce to far corners of the world, while others have married science to industry for the greater comfort and enrichment of our lives. Some, in the face of established authority, have proclaimed new freedoms, while others have devised new systems of law and government. And all of us have put down with a firm hand the tyrants that have arisen from time to time within or beyond our borders. So, as the centuries have passed and the shuttle has flashed back and forth on the loom -- and despite the breaks in the threads and the blots in the colours -- the tapestry has unrolled with two themes, simple and majestic: the dignity of man's mind and the sanctity of his spirit.

Within our community, as in others, some are close familiar neighbours; others live a little farther away. Between some of us there are special bonds of race and culture, but this will not ruffle or disturb our relations with the rest. The fabric of our community stretches out sturdily to include all.

Most of us belong to families of nations, and some members of our families live a long way off. Nevertheless we like to think of them as being part of our own community. Surely we are not going to build any sort of fence about our special Atlantic group or ask of any of our members that they should cut themselves off in any way from any part of their own families.

Our North Atlantic association, like the community of all free men, must always look outwards as well as inwards. If we have knowledge, we are glad to share it with others all over the world, as we would wish them to share theirs with us. If we have lifted from the backs of men and women in our own countries some of the load of toil and drudgery which our fathers and mothers carried, we would like those in other lands to lighten their own loads and we would like to help them do so. If we have fought for our own freedom, against tyranny and oppression, we cannot turn away our face when freedom anywhere is threatened.

In the future, as in the past, we must be the high champions of freedom -- freedom of thought and religion, freedom from hunger and fear. We have a way of life that seems good to us. We wish to live and let live; to choose who shall rule over us; to lead our private lives with our families without fear of dark faces at our windows or midnight knockings on

our doors; to be able to move as we choose from place to place and from job to job; to take a pride in our work and to feel that our own families and others too are each year able to lead a fuller life. And we are determined, at this time, to build up our united strength so that we may have confidence that we can protect our free way of life against any challenge. In this way we of the Atlantic community will go forward, not alone but with our brothers now beyond our borders, looking to the day when "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn way any more".

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