



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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NATO IN CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICY

Partial text of a statement by Mr. Paul Martin, Minister of National Health and Welfare, before the Members of the NATO Military Committee, Ottawa, April 8, 1957.

Mr. Chairman, Gentleman, I consider it a privilege to have the opportunity of meeting you today and, on behalf of the Canadian Government, of welcoming you officially to our country. We have been looking forward for some time to the visit to Canada of the Military Committee of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The Military Committee is for us the symbol of NATO's vigilance and preparedness. I should like to express to you our very sincere appreciation for your relentless efforts in making the Organization an effective instrument of Collective defence. We know that it is no easy task to maintain a high state of military preparedness, when there are so many other demands today on the resources of member governments; however, the nature of the struggle in which we are engaged has shown that a strong military organization alone is not sufficient to ensure our survival, and that a great number of problems in the economic, social and cultural fields must also be allowed a claim on our resources. It is therefore essential that a balance be struck in the allocation of our resources. The Canadian Government has always felt, gentlemen, that you have made and continue to make excellent use of the often limited means placed at your disposal.

Recent events, and I do not mean only those in the Middle East, have emphasized to all Canadians the importance and the responsibility of Canadian foreign policy, even where there appear to be few direct Canadian interests. These events could not fail to induce the Canadian Government to make a reassessment of the principles which have underlined our policies and the factors which bear on them, as I am sure, has been the case for every other government interested in the maintenance of peace throughout the world.

This reassessment has confirmed, if this needed to be confirmed, that above all our foreign policy must be Canadian, based on Canadian considerations, Canadian values and Canadian interest, the greatest of which, apart from freedom itself, is peace. But a Canadian policy in this day and age is not necessarily an independent policy. Indeed, no country in the world today, even the most powerful, in the preservation of peace and security, can run the risk of a policy of independence in foreign affairs, in the sense that independence means isolation from one's friends or immunity from the effect of their decisions and their actions.

We have also again been struck by the "parallel" and interdependent importance of the United Nations and NATO. The United Nations is important, very important, and we do not think we could do without it. The hopes and aspirations which we felt in San Francisco in 1945 have not therefore really diminished, and the United Nations continues to be an essential element of Canadian foreign policy. At the same time, we have recognized that, as long as it remains an imperfect instrument for peace, especially as long as there is a "double standard" among its membership with respect to compliance in its resolutions, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization must be, as a deterrent and a shield against aggression. The Atlantic Alliance therefore remains the effective basis of our policy of collective security, and will remain so until the United Nations can discharge that responsibility effectively.

This reassessment has further brought out that the unity, cohesion and strength of NATO depend primarily upon the closest possible cooperation between the United States, the United Kingdom and France. There are of course no second-class powers in our Alliance, but I believe we all agree that this triangular relationship to which I have referred is simply a realistic recognition that the United States, the United Kingdom and France are to a very great extent, the heart and soul and much of the muscle of the Atlantic community. It is logical therefore that one of the objectives of Canadian foreign policy is the maintenance and strengthening of the good relationship between these three countries, especially since, in a sense, we are a part of every side of the triangle.

The United States shares with us the North American continent and we are linked with her by ties of friendship and neighbourliness of geography, trade and self-interest. Our ties with Great Britain and France have a very special character evolving from history and tradition and race. We have with them a family relationship of a kind which is easy to feel but hard to describe. You will realize then how strongly we in Canada feel about cooperation between the three great Western Powers in and out of NATO.

You will also realize how much NATO has been woven into the fabric of Canadian foreign policy.

In the military field, for instance, almost everything Canada is doing relates to our participation in NATO, and therefore is designed to bolster the military strength of the Alliance. In fact, we can probably say that little in Canadian military planning can be considered today as exclusively Canadian in character. When our defence efforts are not related to the maintenance of an effective Canadian contribution in Europe to the NATO shield, they are then designed to assist in the defence of North America, a region which, we must always remember, is an integral part of the NATO area, and within which everything being done has a direct bearing on the defensive strength of the Alliance as a whole.

We are very glad of course to have Canadian soldiers and airmen serving in Europe alongside some of your compatriots, engaged in the vital watch for any move which might constitute a threat to the security of our community. As Mr. Pearson said in his message last week on the occasion of the 8th Anniversary of the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty on April 4, 1949, it is they, our Canadian troops in Europe, under NATO command along with their fellow NATO allies, who bear the immediate burden of holding back the spread of Soviet oppression and preserving world peace. Canadians are proud of the loyalty and devotion of their Service personnel in Europe, and the Canadian Government is prepared to maintain that contribution in Europe as long as it is considered necessary for the protection of the Atlantic community, and as long as the other members of the Organization, who have as much at stake in the security of Western Europe, are prepared and willing to carry their equitable share of the sacrifices it calls for.

It is our policy to ensure that our troops in Europe be equipped with the most modern weapons available, and that they be trained at all times in the latest techniques of warfare, so that they may contribute their fair share to the effectiveness of the Alliance. In line with this policy, the Canadian Government began last year the replacement of some of the F-86 aircraft at the Canadian bases in France and Germany by the valuable all-weather jet interceptor CF-100. By the end of this year, four of the twelve Canadian squadrons in Europe will have been fully equipped with this latest type of aircraft.

It is only natural that the Canadian Government takes a great interest in the North American side of NATO's military organization. As General Norstad explained recently in an address before the American Council on NATO in New York, we must remember that the hard core of the West's military strength is its retaliatory forces, and that their most powerful single element.

is the United States Strategic Air Command. If the NATO line were violated, if our Alliance were attacked, it is the great power of the Strategic Air Command which would have to deliver the decisive blow to the enemy.

It is clear to us, therefore, as I am sure it must be clear to all other NATO members, that any weak point in the protective line surrounding this main retaliatory force will not only be a threat to the Strategic Air Command but also to the very security of the Alliance as a whole. The Canadian Government has accepted as its main task on the North American continent to cooperate as much as it can in the maintenance of this defensive ring around the Strategic Air Command. Given the territory which needs to be covered, you will appreciate that the ensuing responsibilities call for very considerable efforts and for equally large financial expenditures on our part. Most of you are no doubt familiar with the extensive network of air defence arrangements which we, in conjunction with the United States, have considered it necessary to build in the north. Although the establishment of these radar warning systems has confronted us with major difficulties and posed challenging problems, once the decision was taken that they were essential to the defence of the free world, we were determined to carry these programmes to a successful end. With the generous assistance of our neighbour to the south, we have succeeded in building up an effective protection for this northern side of the NATO area which is of benefit not only to the North American partners of the Alliance but to their European members as well.

These remarks about our defence policy would not be complete without a reference to the Canadian mutual aid programme. Since its inception in April 1950, the Canadian mutual aid programme has resulted in the provision of military assistance to eleven of our NATO allies, to an estimated total value of \$1,275,000,000. The elements of this programme take many forms, and range from the transfers of equipment to assistance in air training. As Mr. Campney, our Minister of National Defence, stated at the last December Ministerial meeting, we propose to continue, within the limits of our resources and continental defence requirements, this kind of programme for as long as it can be shown to be of effective assistance to our NATO partners.

While we continue to be aware of the vital importance of maintaining our guard in the military sphere, we have become equally convinced that the earlier cohesion and sense of purpose which prompted the nations of the Atlantic community to come together was perhaps not so strong, and that it is now time to give practical meaning to the many articles of the Treaty which envisaged a community bound together, not only by a common defence organization, but also by effective political, economic and cultural ties, and by the tangible promotion of conditions of stability and well-being.

The Canadian Government, therefore, looks upon the report as a significant landmark in the development of the Atlantic community. We are giving the report our whole-hearted support, and since the approval of its recommendations by the Ministerial Council last December, we have extended every possible cooperation to the Secretary-General in his efforts to have it implemented.

Although it is probably still too early to try to assess what the impact of the Committee of Three recommendations will be on the Organization, recent developments may tend to confirm the appropriateness of the warning sounded by the "Three Wise Men", that while it was not too difficult to make the recommendations, it might well be far more difficult for the member governments to put them into effect.

We believe that the Alliance will be a living and genuine community only when political consultation takes place as a matter of habit, and when member governments abide by the general principle of not adopting firm policies or making major political pronouncements on matters which significantly affect the Alliance, without adequate advance consultation. This kind of political consultation seems essential to maintain solidarity between members, more particularly at this time when the Soviet Government is clearly intent on playing one ally off against another. There are of course some cases where, understandably, because of a lack of sufficient time or for political reasons, the powers concerned and especially the big powers, have to deal with certain issues in a forum other than NATO; nevertheless, we believe that in general there remains a wide scope for effective consultation.

In conclusion, I will say that the Canadian Government is not losing sight of the severe strain to which NATO has been subjected in the last year, or so, nor are we so unrealistic as to expect that honest differences among member countries will not occur again. But, having said this, I add that there is not the slightest doubt in our minds that NATO remains no less necessary now than it was in 1949. The form of the Soviet threat to the free world may have changed, but its basic objectives remain the same. It may be presented in a different wrapping, but the challenge is still there. We have been pleased to observe that Canadian public opinion appears to have successfully avoided the pitfalls of the mirage which the pronouncements from the Kremlin about co-existence were designed to set up. We estimate that, now in Canada, there is probably a better understanding of NATO, and thus a more informed support of the aims and purpose of the Organization, than was the case a few years ago. The Canadian Government's interest in the non-military activities of NATO has led the Canadian public to appreciate more fully both the civil and military aspects involved in the development of the Atlantic community, and has strengthened the view that these two aspects can no longer safely be considered in water-tight compartments, either between or within nations.

I can assure you, gentlemen, that the Canadian Government will continue to do everything within its power to foster still further this public support for the Organization. We believe that as long as the Organization rests on the faith and the conviction of the 300 million people who constitute the Atlantic community, NATO will be able to play the effective and constructive role which you and I expect from it, not only for collective military defence, but in the maintenance of international peace and security, and the solution of the problems that now divide the world.

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