

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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WESTERN EUROPE AND AMERICAN SECURITY:

MAKING A NORTH ATLANTIC PACT

Text of an address by Mr. L. B. Pearson,
Secretary of State for External Affairs,
to the Mount Holyoke College Institute
of the United Nations at South Hadley,
Massachusetts, on Friday, July 8, 1949.

Western diplomats and foreign ministers seem to have recently abandoned the custom of orally unveiling brave new worlds and eagerly anticipating friendly cooperation and the rule of law in world affairs. They now seem to prefer cautious warnings against undue optimism at any particular turn in international events. Is this because diplomats are basically cynical people, indifferent to the universal desire for security and peace? Or is it because they were recently so dazzled by the vanished image of a glowing future that they are now blind to the hope of better international relations? Whatever the answer may be, it is perhaps significant that a common cautious approach to many major international issues seems now to prevail among western leaders.

There is also, I think, general agreement about the nature and the proportions of the task facing the West in the struggle for the kind of a world which decent people desire and deserve. That agreement, however, is not likely to express itself in policy and action, unless the views and conclusions of those whose business it is to study foreign affairs appeal to the common sense -- the informed common sense -- of the average citizen.

Taxpayers need no reminding that foreign policy, and even more, the lamentable results of the failure of foreign policy, costs them at the present time far more money than ever before. This realization has itself, however, caused a development of great importance. Because expenditures for foreign affairs have to be supported in the legislatures of the western democracies, the impact of public opinion on foreign policy is now more general, immediate and direct than ever before. It is, therefore, correspondingly more important that opinion be informed and intelligent.

I do not suggest that the hard-pressed citizen should study international balance of payments figures, to the exclusion of baseball scores, or forsake Bob Hope completely for a scrutiny of the clauses of the Treaty of Peace with Bulgaria. I submit, however, that the main direction of western foreign policy must find very broad public acceptance and public understanding, both amongst the experts and the casually interested. Nor should such understanding and acceptance be spasmodic and intermittent. The basic design for peace cannot be changed half way through its construction, any more than the shape of a house can be transformed as the walls go up.

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For these reasons, before considering certain detailed aspects of the North Atlantic Treaty, it is important to examine the validity of some of the assumptions which gave rise to the idea of the Treaty in the first place. An open-minded inquiry into them raises several intriguing questions; for instance, to what extent is the security of America dependent on conditions in Europe? Also, why should the provisions of a piece of paper called the Atlantic Treaty work any better than the Briand-Kellogg or Locarno Pacts?

International issues are usually approached on the basis of the judgment we make as to their effect on our own national or personal security. Certainly the North Atlantic Treaty is no exception to this rule. Can it be justified on that score? In this favoured continent, the temptation to mind our own business — in the hope that others will do likewise — is always present. Because of the cost, the vexations and frustrations which are a part of active participation in the affairs of a confused and turbulent world, it is wise to keep reminding ourselves of the circumstances which would make a retreat to isolation or partial isolation unrealistic and unwise.

Warnings against such a retreat dwell usually on the wonders and the horrors of modern science which has re-shaped the world in our lifetime, and has far outpaced man's social development. You will, I hope, forgive me for emphasizing once again this fundamental aspect of international relations because it sometimes seems that of the many and complex dangers which we face, the greatest of them all is the danger of ignoring the obvious.

We have all too quickly become accustomed to the idea that a plane can circle the globe without stopping; that an atomic bomb can be delivered anywhere; that it may soon be possible to fire deadly missiles across oceans; that bacteriological warfare opens up whole new chapters in the already highly developed technique of human destruction. While we cannot be otherwise than aware of these grim concepts, we have almost begun to take them for granted. Certainly we have hesitated to accept soberly and fully the political implications which the advances of science have in this century thrust upon us whether we like it or not. In 1901 the Chief of Police of Chicago made a record-breaking dash around the world which took sixty days. Politically and socially we are still going around the world in 60 days. We should, however, base our international outlook on the sixty-hour global non-stop flight. When we do, it becomes immediately obvious that it would be just as difficult for this continent to live with security in isolation as it would be for a wealthy man to live alone in safety in a lawless slum.

In the absence of a strong and workable supranational legal and political order the threat of aggression is always present whether it originates in Germany, Italy or Japan, as before the recent war; or whether it emerges in a somewhat different form as at present. It is unfortunately perfectly clear that the rule of law cannot yet be established internationally. It seems to me to be equally clear that while the United Nations can do and is doing many good things, and while we should keep striving to make it more effective, nevertheless it cannot in present circumstances give any of its members that security against aggression which they seek. It follows, therefore, that the next best way of dealing with aggression, or the threat of aggression, is for friendly states who have confidence in each other's pacific intentions to band together in order to be in the position to take collective police action against an aggressor. The first aim of

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such an arrangement, of which the North Atlantic Pact is an example, is to stop aggression before it starts by convincing the potential attacker that he would gain nothing by a resort to arms. If this can be done, then a better atmosphere can be created for the solution of those international problems which breed mistrust, fear and insecurity. Of course, without such a solution, neither the Atlantic nor any other Peace Pact can in the long run achieve its objectives.

In contrast to this principle of collective action, a premium was put on aggression and the defiance of international authority in the interwar period. Manchuria, the march into the Ruhr, Ethiopia, Spain, Austria, Czechoslovakia — these names should remind us continually that a policy of vacillation and appeasement is fatal in the tough and lawless sphere of international relations; that collective action, with full national acceptance of risks and responsibility, and on the broadest possible basis, is the best possible defence against aggression.

Unhappily, however, the events of the post-war period do more than justify the principle of collective, as opposed to national, action as the best guarantee of security. They make such action imperative in practice. But just as the peoples of the democracies usually wish to mind their own business without interference from outside, they are loath to impute contrary motives to others. Those, particularly, with a liberal outlook bend over backwards to be fair-minded and give the other fellow the benefit of the doubt. This understandable attitude becomes dangerous, however, when it ignores the evidence. That evidence, which is concerned largely with the actions and policies of the U.S.S.R., provides today ample justification for concentration on the idea of collective defence which lies behind the Atlantic Pact.

The transformation of a great ally in war to a bitter antagonist in peace is always a tragic development. Today it marks also the dismal, if temporary, negation of our high hopes for a "one world" of countries cooperating peacefully within the United Nations. Lamentations, however, will not mend the split in a divided globe. Courage and common sense demand that we deal with the world as it is, not as we wish it were. In spite of the frantic efforts of communist-inspired propaganda to mislead and confuse, we know that the main reason for the present discouraging situation lies in the aim of the U.S.S.R. to fasten the yoke of totalitarian communism on the necks of free people. The facts in this connection speak for themselves and they go back further than is sometimes thought.

As long ago as February, 1945, several months before V-E Day, the U.S.S.R. demonstrated its way of interpreting the Yalta declaration on liberated Europe which had just been signed. That now famous declaration provided for "the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live" and the Big Three undertook when necessary to form "interim governmental authorities broadly representative of all democratic elements in the population and pledged to the earliest possible establishment through free elections of governments responsive to the will of the people". When the U.S.S.R. brutally forced the appointment of a communist-dominated government in Roumania, the United States and Britain, invoking the Yalta agreement, jointly protested the Soviet action and called for joint consultation. This was flatly refused by Moscow. The communists had made their choice of non-cooperation and conflict, which culminated in the formal splitting of Europe into opposing blocks, when Mr. Molotov withdrew on July 2nd, 1947, from the initial conference at Paris on Secretary Marshall's Harvard proposal for a concerted European recovery programme. Then, in September, 1947, the Cominform was established in Belgrade. This so-called information bureau was patently the post-war version of the Communist International, organized by the Bolsheviks in 1919, to

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foment world revolution. In the autumn of 1947, a wave of communist-led strikes, accompanied by violence and rioting, convulsed France and Italy. The seizure of Czechoslovakia in the following February was a gruesome example of how "the U.S.S.R. and the democratic countries aim at whittling down imperialism and strengthening democracy" to quote the Cominform Manifesto. x Jan Masaryk's death, which followed, was a tragic symbol of the futility of trying to cooperate with the communists. A further concrete example of the Soviet Union's distaste for any form of genuine international cooperation was her refusal to join such United Nations agencies as the I.L.O., ICAO, FAO, IRO, International Bank, International Fund, UNESCO, and the ITO.

Even more serious, however, is the indictment of Soviet methods and intentions supplied by the Soviet leaders themselves. The record is clear, candid and damning. Take the following paragraph from Stalin's "Leninism" in the 1933 edition:

"The victory of socialism in one country is not an end in itself; it must be looked upon as a support, as a means for hastening the proletarian victory in every other land. For the victory of the revolution in one country (in Russia, for the nonce) is not only the result of the unequal development and the progressive decay of imperialism; it is likewise the beginning and the continuation of the world revolution."

Or the following flat statement from the programme of the Communist International:

"The ultimate aim of the Communist International is to replace world capitalist economy by a world system of Communism."

The same attitude was recently revealed in a letter from the Moscow Central Committee, which attacked the idea that there could be "peaceful development of capitalist elements alongside socialism" as "a rotten and opportunist theory." By the communists' own actions and by their own words, the nature and extent of the menace of world communism to the free nations is made clear.

All this has a direct bearing on the answer to the first question about the assumptions underlying the Atlantic Treaty; "how far is the security of America dependent on Europe?" In purely physical terms, and because of the special situation created by the policies of the U.S.S.R., it is no exaggeration to say that the safety of this continent now lies in the security and freedom of western Europe. Anything like international communism, which menaces that security and freedom, menaces America. The American continents standing alone with a population of less than three hundred million could hardly be secure in a communist-dominated Europe and Asia. If this fundamental point is valid, certain conclusions regarding cooperation and mutual aid naturally and inevitably follow. On the other hand, if it is not fully accepted, the whole structure of economic, military and political cooperation, no matter how elaborate or carefully worked out, may well fall to the ground in the face of the first adverse economic or political wind. In that collapse, the Atlantic Pact would certainly be involved.

The immediate background of the North Atlantic Treaty has been reviewed and recorded so often that it need only be mentioned in outline here. Mr. Bevin's momentous speech in the British House of Commons at the beginning of 1948 may be said to have begun it all. At that time he said that he had hoped that when the German and Austrian peace settlements

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x Adopted at secret meeting in Poland, September 21-28, 1947. Made public in Moscow, October 5.

were negotiated, agreement between the Four Powers would close the breach between East and West. But, the events of 1947 had shown, he added, that this breach could not be closed and that "the free nations of Western Europe must now draw closely together". He went on to express the hope that treaties to this end would now be signed with the Benelux countries. Talks followed between Britain, France and the Low Countries, which resulted in the signing of the Brussels Pact on March 17th. This agreement established in Western Europe a nucleus of five democratic, non-aggressive nations bound together more closely than ever before in time of peace. On the very day of its signature, the Brussels Treaty was officially welcomed by the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of Canada. Mr. King, our Prime Minister at that time, said in Parliament that "the peoples of all free countries may be assured that Canada will play her full part in every movement to give substance to the conception of an effective system of collective security by the development of regional pacts under the Charter of the United Nations". Mr. Truman stated, "I am sure that the determination of the free countries of Europe to protect themselves will be matched by an equal determination on our part to help them to do so." Then, on June 19th, the Vandenberg resolution supporting the association of the United States with collective arrangements based on self-help and mutual aid, and which would increase national security, was approved by the United States Senate. Finally, in early July, meetings on the official level between representatives of the Brussels nations and the United States and Canada were begun. These continued until September, when they were suspended for governmental consultation. They were resumed on December 10th. The final text of the Pact, first published on March 18th, was signed on April 4th by the twelve "founder members" who by this time also included Norway, Denmark, Italy, Iceland and Portugal.

I am not, I think, betraying any diplomatic secret when I say that in the discussions leading up to the Pact, which were conducted in a spirit of complete frankness and understanding, two main lines of approach to the problem of North Atlantic security became evident. On this side of the Atlantic there was a natural and inevitable reluctance to go beyond a general commitment of mutual assistance or to take any action which would appear to cut across the formal responsibility of Congress or Parliament to declare war. On the European side there was an equally natural and inevitable reluctance to accept a political commitment of mutual aid without satisfactory assurances that this commitment would be promptly and satisfactorily implemented if and when the emergency occurred. It is, I think, a tribute to the authors of the pact - but far more so to the good sense of the peoples whom they represented - that these two points of view were reconciled in the Articles of the Treaty. This could not, of course, have happened if the signatories did not feel that the spirit behind their signatures was even more important than the wording of the Articles themselves. Of course, the letter of a law - or a treaty - is important but excessive and legalistic concentration on words -- the attempt to squeeze a hidden meaning out of every comma -- is an unrewarding pursuit. An international pact is, after all, not the same thing as a contract in domestic law. As Mr. Acheson once said in a press conference discussing the Pact, there is no sheriff sitting up in the clouds who is going to come down and see that this contract is carried out. In one sense, he continued, every fulfilment of an obligation by a nation is a fulfilment of a moral obligation. A related point is made in the Report of the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations when it states "the course of action envisaged in the Treaty is substantially that which the United States would follow without the Treaty". This consideration also applies to Canada and in it, I think, lies the best hope for the success and workability of the Pact. Paper agreements between sovereign states cannot create the community of interest and common aims upon which lasting cooperation depends but they should, to be effective, reflect these elements which are essential to concerted action. Fortunately, there is reason to believe that the North Atlantic Treaty does this.

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There was a further difficulty which gave those of us who were concerned with the negotiation of the Treaty much concern. We knew that our governments did not have aggressive or provocative policies; that they believed sincerely and firmly in the principles of the United Nations Charter and were anxious to strengthen the organization in which those principles were embodied. We felt that our record at its meetings was the best proof of our support for the United Nations. Nevertheless, we knew also, of course, that those communist governments who by omission and commission had shown their contempt for the Charter and for international cooperation under it, would misrepresent our support for the Atlantic Pact as a deliberate effort on our part to sabotage the United Nations. We attempted to meet this charge by carefully reserving in our Pact all our obligations and rights under the Charter. We also deliberately and specifically subordinated our Pact to the Charter, and we negotiated it under Article 51 of that Charter. I know, of course, that nothing we could do would prevent vicious and malicious misrepresentation by the communists. We had to expect that. We were more worried, however, by the suggestion from more sincere and respectable quarters that, in some way, those who advocated the Atlantic Pact were being disloyal to the United Nations. Of course, it may be argued - as it has been argued - that Article 51 was never intended to shelter a collective security arrangement such as our Pact. It can also be argued, however, and I think with greater force, that Article 51 was never intended to prevent nations working out such defensive collective arrangements after it had been sufficiently demonstrated that the Security Council was being paralysed for this purpose by the policy of one of its permanent members.

The argument, however, is a barren one. The Atlantic democracies are satisfied that their record at Lake Success is sufficient proof of their resolve not to allow the Atlantic Pact to interfere with their obligations or their rights under the Charter.

The heart of the Atlantic Pact is found in Article 5. Under this Article the parties agree that an armed attack against one or more signatories in Europe or North America shall be regarded as an attack against them all; and they undertake to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area in the event of such an attack. The nature and extent of the action required to discharge this obligation, which may include the use of armed force, is left to each participant to determine. Any measures taken, however, shall terminate as soon as the Security Council has taken effective action.

One aspect of the Treaty which is of great interest is the question of action in the event of indirect aggression. The problem of defining for treaty purposes this insidious technique is so complex and full of pitfalls that an attempt to do so might well confuse rather than clarify matters. Furthermore, a specific commitment to deal with indirect aggression along the lines of the commitment undertaken in Article 5 would not be acceptable to most countries in present circumstances. Yet the danger from this kind of aggression is a very real one. Indeed it may well be that we will not again experience that type of direct armed aggression with which we have become so familiar. Some cynic has said that generals are always preparing to win the last war. Diplomats should be careful not to concentrate on preventing the last war, by making the test of aggression an unreal and antiquated one.

Hitler, for instance, was almost a primitive practitioner of indirect aggression in comparison with present day standards. Nevertheless the evidence of the Nuremberg trials indicates the degree of deception of which this technique was capable even at that rudimentary stage of its development. The carefully planned seizure of

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Austria by the Nazis in 1938 provides an illuminating example. The Austrian Government had appointed the Nazi Seyss-Inquart as Chancellor under the threat of German invasion. Just before his appointment, Hitler ordered German troops across the border. Goering thereupon dictated over the telephone to the German Embassy in Vienna a telegram which Seyss-Inquart was to send Hitler to justify the military action which already had been initiated. The telegram asked the German Government to send troops as soon as possible to prevent bloodshed. Goering told the German Embassy that it was not necessary for Seyss-Inquart to send the telegram -- all that he needed to do was agree with its terms. The Embassy merely informed Goering later that the Austrian Chancellor had agreed and the telegram which was never sent was quoted to show that Austria had requested the presence of German troops to prevent disorder.

This sordid little story illustrates, I think, some of the difficulties of dealing with the problem of indirect aggression by means of a specific obligation couched in the necessary legalistic language of a Treaty. It is, however, true that under Article 4 of the North Atlantic Treaty the signatories do agree to consult together whenever the political independence of any of them is threatened. This could mean when political independence is threatened from within by activities inspired, armed and directed from without. It is, therefore, possible to meet the problem of indirect aggression under the Treaty, if the problem is clear and the danger is obvious. But at the same time it should be noted that there is nothing in the Treaty which gives the participants the right to meddle in each other's purely internal affairs. Nor, and this is just as important, is there anything in the Treaty which gives any member the right to demand assistance from other members in dealing with a domestic political difficulty.

There are three other articles of the Pact which I would like to mention. The first is Article 3, which reads:

"In order more effectively to achieve the objectives of this Treaty, the Parties, separately and jointly, by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid, will maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack."

In examining this article we must remember that the Atlantic Pact is only one link in the economic, political and military chain which the west is forging to protect a free society. It would be clearly as unwise to expect this link to do the work of the whole chain as it would be to strengthen it at the expense of other important links. Furthermore, "self-help and mutual aid" is a pretty general expression, which extends beyond the possession and the supplying of adequate arms. Indeed, it has already been recognized in Washington, that economic aid and military aid are complementary, and that if the two should conflict in the effort to strengthen Western Europe, the former should be given priority.

The problem, against an active political background, of striking a balance between the economic needs and the defence requirements of a healthy and secure Western Europe is not one for which I can present a neat solution. The extremes to be avoided are obvious. If Western Europe used too much of her productive capacity for defence, and received too much of her help in the form of armaments, she might be armed to the teeth but stripped to the bone. The resulting political weakness would more than offset the security gained from the possession of adequate new weapons. On

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the other hand, only wilful or blind ignorance could support a policy of fattening a defenceless Europe, to fall an easy victim to the first aggressor. Perhaps the most important result of adequate military defences would be a state of mind leading to economic gains. A householder who may be evicted at any time is not likely to devote energy and money to long-term repairs and improvements. The exposed economies of Western Europe may well suffer from the same handicap.

Another consideration which we on this continent should keep before us is expressed by Premier Queuille of France, when he said recently of the United States, "We think you would come to liberate us if we were invaded, but this time I am afraid nothing would be left to liberate except the corpse of Europe."

The problem involved in Article 3, so easy to state, so difficult to resolve, is related also to Article 2, which reads:

"The Parties will contribute toward the further development of peaceful and friendly international relations by strengthening their free institutions, by bringing about a better understanding of the principles upon which these institutions are founded, and by promoting conditions of stability and well-being. They will seek to eliminate conflict in their international economic policies and will encourage economic collaboration between any or all of them."

This article is one which the Canadian Government has always considered of special importance, as it emphasizes the fact that our Pact is -- or should be -- far more than a military alliance of the type which disappears as soon as the emergency which prompted its negotiation has disappeared. We must broaden the basis of this alliance so that it becomes a living, constructive social and economic force in international affairs. Article 2 gives us a foundation on which to do this.

Then there is Article 9, which sets up -- in general terms -- the machinery to carry out the objects of the association. A great deal remains to be done before this Article is implemented by the actual establishment of such machinery. Work, of course, is proceeding for this purpose, and its successful conclusion will make demands on our political vision and understanding. The machinery must be effective in coordinating and strengthening the defensive capacity of our association. It must be simple, with those who have the main responsibilities possessing the power. At the same time, the smaller members of the group cannot be bound by plans in the making of which they did not participate and which they may not have even known about. A solution may be found in the Council, which represents all the members, having the power to lay down general principles of collective action with smaller agencies with delegated powers responsible for transforming these principles into detailed plans.

The phenomenally successful World War II coalition depended to a large extent on the political unity achieved by Roosevelt and Churchill, the strategic coordination effected by the combined Chiefs of Staff, and the unity of command established in the various theatres of operations.

Article 9 provides the basis for two of these principles -- a Council which would probably be composed of Foreign Ministers

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or their representatives, and a Defence Committee, likewise made up of the Defence Ministers or their representatives. The Council would, of course, be primarily concerned with broad political questions, and the Defence Committee with the relation of military and political considerations. In addition to these bodies, a Chiefs of Staff Committee, with a permanent combined staff, will probably deal with central military planning. The question of unity of command could be handled by designating Commanders-in-Chief for various areas or by setting up skeleton staffs to study the problems relating to possible theatres of operation. Lastly, the matter of supply --shipping, raw materials, food, communications, and so on -- would come under some sort of Military Supply Committee. These main organs would, of course, be augmented by various working groups and subcommittees. The efficient integration and organization of the units established will be of the highest importance. Its achievement, however, will depend more on day to day friendly contacts, on the growth of the habit of consultation and cooperative work, rather than on high-sounding principles and grandiose formulae.

May I make one further observation in closing? If the Atlantic Pact is thought of as a heavy black line on a map, fencing off a certain area from aggression, and behind which a group of nations concern themselves solely with their own security, then the Pact may prove to possess the same fatal weaknesses for its members as the Maginot Line mentality possessed for certain countries before the war. In this day and age, even collective isolation is a weakness. There is now no area in the world which is beyond the concern of all freedom and peace-loving nations. It would do us little good if we moved only from national isolation to area isolation. Security, like war, knows no limits.

This is a very sketchy, and, I am afraid, inadequate examination of such an important subject as the making of the Atlantic Pact. As one who participated in that high adventure, my abiding impression is one of an earnest desire on the part of the representatives of the various governments concerned to accept compromises and make concessions in the interest of general agreement. Behind this was the full confidence we had in each other's good faith, good will and peaceful intentions. No single country involved in this Pact has had any aggressive purpose in bringing it to a successful conclusion, and no country could or would use it for any aggressive purpose now that it has been signed. The communists may rage that this is not so. We will refute their charges by the only proof that matters, our record in the days ahead. We will show, I am sure, by that record, that this is indeed a Pact of Peace.

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