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No. 67/40 AN ERA OF CHANGE FOR THE COMMONWEALTH AND NATO

Speech by the Right Honourable L.B. Pearson,
Prime Minister of Canada, at the Mansion House
Luncheon, London, England, November 27, 1967.

. . . I've already expressed my feelings, my Lord Mayor, at becoming a Freeman of this great city and joining the roll of illustrious men and women, some of whom you have mentioned. I think of London as the heart of Britain, just as I have always thought of Britain itself as a repository of steadiness and good sense in a world where these qualities are, more than ever, needed.

Nor do I forget that Britain remains the centre of our Commonwealth of Nations. This association of free states is going through difficult times. But no international arrangement or system offers a more hopeful example of the kind of flexibility and adaptability that is required internationally to meet the challenges and the demands of today's sweeping changes and new conditions.

Both Britain and Canada can take pride in the development of the new Commonwealth out of the old Empire and the earlier Commonwealth -- a development which, as you know, has now reached the point where we have an association of, I believe, 27 member states from every part of the world, varying greatly in size, in power and in wealth - different creeds, different forms of government, different ways of life. But the Commonwealth, with all its frustrations but with all its promise too, has established a bridge between these different cultures, these different races, at a time when there aren't many bridges of this kind left in the world. Some parts of the bridge seem at the moment to be rather shaky, but that means that we should not scrap the bridge but that we should strengthen it and thereby increase its value to ourselves and to the world.

While the Commonwealth is now of special importance because there is racial and geographical variety, its heart and its soul remain here in London. Without the vision and leadership of Britain, the Commonwealth could not have evolved from Empire in the way it did. Without the goodwill and support of Britain, and the older members of the Commonwealth, including my own country, the Commonwealth will not survive. If it should fail, let the failure not be through any fault of understanding, patience or effort on our part.

Britain's role in the transition of Empire into Commonwealth is only one reason why as a Canadian I'm proud of our British heritage, and, as I have

already said earlier this morning, why I honour our British traditions. I do not forget how much Canada -- indeed, how much the world -- owes to this mother country, how much we owe to its institutions, based on law and justice and freedom, which are the source of so much of our own strength.

Britain has a constructive and indispensable role to play in the world of today and tomorrow. Current financial and economic difficulties should not be permitted to obscure this fact. We in Canada have watched with sympathy and concern the efforts made by this country in recent years to resolve these difficulties. We have helped when we could and when it was required. We have, for instance, shared in the co-operative arrangements to support sterling when such support was necessary, just as Britain helped to support our dollar in 1962 when it was necessary. We have worked together to fashion means to improve general international liquidity in the future, and recent events have underlined the importance of this task and how essential it is that it should proceed and should succeed. Recent events have also exposed some of the obstacles in the way of such success which should be removed. Our two countries have also taken leading roles in the series of negotiations in the past two decades that have brought successive reductions in trade barriers, culminating in the Kennedy Round arrangements, which we are at the moment hoping to implement.

The economic problems you face today are not unique to Britain. They confront, in varying degrees and at various times, all states. Britain has had longer experience than most of us in finding solutions; often they have had to be improvised for these problems. We've all benefited in the past from your practical genius in the art of government, in its economic as well as its political aspects. I am confident that this genius - with the hard work that alone makes genius effective - will enable Britain to overcome present difficulties.

I hope, also, that we shall all learn something from these difficulties, because their significance goes beyond your boundaries. In particular, we should now realize, if we didn't realize it before, that co-operation between nations, in finance, monetary policy and economics, is almost as important as it is for defence and security. And its breakdown can be almost as disastrous.

In my own country (and not for the first time, as anyone familiar with Canadian history knows), we are also facing problems -- economic problems, financial problems, but especially problems of federalism and national unity. They are our problems, to be solved, as they will be solved, by us and not by outside intervention in our domestic affairs. Let me add that no country in the world has the possibility of a greater future than ours, and no country is more likely to realize that future.

We are trying to find a strong and enduring foundation for political unity and individual opportunity within social, cultural, and geographic diversity. And it's not an easy problem to solve. But this search is not confined to Canada. It is part of the larger search for new dimensions of individual freedom and personal opportunity in a world where man's fantastic technological and scientific progress has only emphasized the primitive character of so much of his social and political behaviour. That is why I believe it to be a chief purpose of the members of the Commonwealth today to work together in the knowledge that the fundamental needs and aspirations of man are universal - whatever his language, whatever the colour of his skin, whatever his race or his country. And this

purpose, as I have just said, is wider than our own country, wider than our Commonwealth. It encompasses the family of man, and its full recognition should be the basis of international relations on this small and crowded planet. But the contemporary world gives little evidence that such a basis is likely to get general acceptance in the immediate future.

We had a vision of what might be done at San Francisco in 1945. That vision soon disappeared. And the cold war came and destroyed the hope that the United Nations would soon ensure freedom, fraternity and security for all men. As a second best, you remember, we formed a regional coalition spanning the Atlantic Ocean - a coalition through which member states could work together for political co-operation and collective defence. This was another postwar dream, this Atlantic dream - the building of an Atlantic community of inter-dependent states willing to pool their sovereignty in the interests of their security and their progress.

We ask ourselves why has NATO not realized more fully these hopes and these aspirations. Well, I might mention one or two reasons - there are many - for this. NATO concentrated on the single, if vitally-important, task, of collective military defence. It was not able to take effective measures for collective political action. National decisions were rarely subordinated to collective decisions, or national policy to collective policy. The United States, whose power dominated the alliance, largely determined the strategy and policy on which collective defence was based. The other members, it should be added, would probably not have acted differently if they had had the same super-power.

France, in due course, repudiated the whole ideal of collective security, falling back on the old and, as I believe, discredited, doctrine of national defence by national action - co-ordinated, if you like, in a military alliance, but with national sovereignty unimpaired. There are governments that still think that nationalism is not only sacred, which it is, but is sufficient, which it is not, and that national problems can be solved within purely national terms of reference. The lessons of history are depressing because they are usually learned too late, even by those who have suffered most from the failure so to learn.

There are other reasons for NATO's inability to realize its full collective potential. One of these, paradoxically, is its success in helping to lessen the fear of an attack on Western Europe. This reduction of tension and fear is not only a tribute to NATO, it's a danger for NATO. After all, fear was the father of the North Atlantic Treaty. And now, with the European member states stronger and more confident, with the Eastern European members of the Warsaw Pact more independent, the Soviet supremacy in the Communist world challenged by a bitterly hostile Peking, collective security, though essential as ever, has lost some of its immediate urgency. Fear of attack has lessened so we may feel that it is safe to relax.

The European -- indeed, the whole world -- situation has become fluid. The polarization of all power between the U.S.S.R., determining the policy of the Communist world, and the U.S.A., dominating that of the democracies, has been altered on the Communist side by Peking and on the Atlantic side by Paris, which

hoped to develop a strong and independent European third force of which it would be the leader.

In short, the political and military realities on which NATO was originally founded have changed. The threat to Western Europe was, if not superseded, at least supplemented by tensions and conflicts in other parts of the world, in the Middle East, in Africa, and, above all, in Southeast Asia, where these tensions exploded into bloody and confused war in Vietnam. There was no Atlantic solidarity in policy for these areas and, to this extent, NATO ceased to meet the vital requirements of some of its members.

NATO, in short, having accomplished its original strategic purpose, as it did (and thank God that it did), has not yet been able to adapt itself adequately to changing conditions both strategic and political. But the need for such adaptation is recognized and is now being faced. If any changes are to be effective, they must take into account the fact that Western Europe has emerged from the postwar condition of political and economic weakness into a position of strength and confidence, grateful for the American support and assistance which has done so much to bring this about but with the desire for a greater share in the control of the alliance and its policies.

Undoubtedly, a greater immediate menace to NATO is the threatened conflict between two of NATO's members, Greece and Turkey, over Cyprus, which is a member of the Commonwealth. It is to be hoped that this conflict, senseless as it would be, can be averted. I think it can, on terms honourable and acceptable to the three governments concerned. We have more hope than we had a day or so ago that this can be done. If it were not averted, then armed conflict between two NATO members, using military equipment provided by other members for other collective defence purposes, could have a fatal effect on the NATO alliance.

One other point. If arrangements are agreed on to avert conflict which call for a stronger United Nations force (and both our countries are serving in that force now) to supervise their carrying-out and to maintain security on the island during that period, then these arrangements must also provide that this United Nations force has the necessary authority and support to discharge its mandate. We must not again have the United Nations force called on to discharge a new responsibility without adequate means for that purpose - political, juridical and military.

I have been talking about NATO and a changing Europe, and a changing world. These changes are not only a challenge for NATO. They are, as I see it, also a challenge for progress toward a European unity which would include Britain - a Europe with a political, economic and defence role of its own, but one which should remain closely associated with the United States and Canada in a European-North American partnership.

The idea of a strong and united Europe is surely a wise one, but only if it can be worked out without isolation from North America. That is why, as I see it, Britain should be a central and integral part of the new Europe, politically and economically. I see this as something which need not weaken ties across the Atlantic or with the rest of the Commonwealth. I see it rather

as something which would help prevent Europe from becoming an isolated third force. If you like, I see Britain in the role of link between Europe and America, the position which has so often been given to Canada in relations between this country and the United States. Maybe we can give you some advice on how to perform that role! Feeling this way, I naturally think it is wrong and unwise for any European country to oppose or put unnecessary obstacles in the way of Britain playing a full and constructive part, as I am sure it would be, in the evolution of a united Europe. . . .

S/C