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THE NEW NATO SITUATION

Speech by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Paul Martin, at the National Newspaper Awards Dinner, Toronto, April 16, 1966.

I am grateful, Mr. Chairman, for the very kind invitation extended to me by the sponsors of the National Newspaper Awards Dinner. It is particularly interesting to be here when the National Newspaper Awards are given. I should like to extend my personal congratulations to those receiving awards for particular merit in a year which has, I understand, seen a great many entries in the competition.

I am also happy, Mr. Chairman, to be present at a banquet bringing together representatives of both the English- and French-language press. I repeat my congratulations to those writers in French whose outstanding merit has been recognized in various ways in this year's awards.

I have noted that there has been a growing tendency on the part of newspapers in one language group to carry articles reflecting the current points of view in newspapers of the other group. This is a welcome contribution to the growth of understanding between different sections of the country.

I have a natural interest also in the part played by the press in the formulation of public attitudes about foreign policy. As the Minister responsible for external affairs, I can explain the nature and background of current Government policy. The debate about the national interest in world affairs should, however, be conducted in much wider terms by all who feel an interest and have a viewpoint to express. The press has a particularly important task in this field of stimulating and focussing this discussion. I hope that, in gathering news and in commenting on its significance, newspapers will not be unduly influenced by the expression of views elsewhere. I hope that they will subject all developments to a rigorous examination in terms of Canadian interests and viewpoints. This is one of the greatest contributions which the press can make to the expression of public attitudes which will help to guide the formulation of policy.

In the past month or so, the question of the attitude of the Government of France toward the North Atlantic Treaty Organization has been one of the foremost questions in public attention and in the preoccupations of the other governments. It has been a source of concern to me and the Canadian Government.

The French Government intends to withdraw French forces from NATO's integrated military structure and French officers from the integrated headquarters. It has asked that the two integrated military headquarters known as SHAPE and the Central European Command be removed from France. It has proposed that Canadian and United States bases be withdrawn by April 1, 1967. The French Government is fully prepared to find a way to retain its forces in Germany and Berlin while transferring them from NATO to French command.

France intends, however, to remain a party to the North Atlantic Treaty and to participate in the activities of the NATO Council.

The other 14 members of NATO, including Canada, issued a declaration on March 18 that:

"the Atlantic alliance has ensured its efficacy as an instrument of defence and deterrence by the maintenance in peacetime of an integrated and interdependent military organization in which, as in no previous alliance in history, the efforts and resources of each are combined for the common security of all. We are convinced that this organization is essential and will continue."

I made it clear that the Canadian Government regretted the French decision and was not persuaded by the arguments which the French Government had used to justify its actions. I have also emphasized that we cherished our association with France, did not question France's dedication to the ideals in international relations which have guided the Western countries and hoped to continue to develop our very friendly relations with that nation.

I list the objectives which the Canadian Government intends to follow in the situation created by the proposed French action. In NATO our policy will be:

First, to seek, in consultation with our allies, including France as far as possible, to limit the damage to the unity and effectiveness of the alliance, and to recreate a relationship of mutual confidence among all the members.

Secondly, to help preserve the essential features of NATO's existing system of unified command and joint planning for collective defence.

Thirdly, to continue to maintain an appropriate contribution to NATO's collective defence system.

Fourthly, to take every opportunity to examine with our allies possibilities for developing improvements to the NATO structure and to consider the future of the alliance in the long run.

With regard to France, the Government will:

First, negotiate with France, either bilaterally or multilaterally as appropriate, fair and reasonable arrangements for those adjustments which may be required as a result of French withdrawal from NATO's integrated defence arrangements.

Secondly, leave the door open for the eventual return of France to full participation in the collective activities of the alliance, should France so decide.

Thirdly, continue, notwithstanding NATO differences and with the co-operation of the French authorities, to develop our bilateral relations with France.

Around the French decisions and the reactions of their allies a good deal of debate has centred. I have no doubt that this debate will continue for some time as the full nature of French intentions becomes clearer and as all the complex rearrangements of a political, military, financial and organizational nature required by the French moves are carried out.

We must ask ourselves first of all what are the fundamental objectives which NATO is intended to serve. Last December, I described the Organization "not only as an assurance of security and as an avenue to peace but as an essential instrument of partnership among the Atlantic nations". We have entered into that partnership for the defence of an Atlantic and Western European community of nations and with the intention of achieving certain long-range objectives beneficial to all of Europe.

The alliance aimed first of all to achieve among member states the most efficient means of common defence against an aggressor. The defence system, in turn, encouraged a return of confidence and provided a shield for economic recovery. By committing important resources to a common defence effort and by entering into a degree of military integration which demanded mutual confidence, the nations concerned took a major step towards overcoming older nationalist rivalries. The NATO system has also provided the framework for the reintegration of Germans and German armed forces into European life.

What have been its functions and objectives in a wider European sense? In spite of their own propaganda, the Soviet Union and other Eastern European states have learned that the NATO alliance did not enter into any military adventurism. Its member states have made their influence felt in Eastern Europe in much saner ways -- by the appeal of trade, prosperity, political freedom and cultural diversity. At the same time, the alliance has made it clear that

provocative action from the other side with respect, for example, to Berlin would be resisted. It has also made clear that, in the end, only negotiation would bring about a real European settlement and with it, perhaps, measures of arms control or disarmament in the world generally.

The interests of Western Europe and North America in these ultimate questions of security and political settlement are inextricably mixed. It has been of the greatest importance, therefore, that the Atlantic states, through NATO and in other ways, should maintain unity and develop their common interests as a means of eventually achieving a broad European settlement with states to the East.

If the final purpose of the NATO arrangements is to be seen in these terms, then any major military or political move affecting the alliance must be considered, first and foremost, in terms of whether it will facilitate or hinder that ultimate European settlement. The disruption of existing military arrangements, the misunderstandings or difficulties between members of the alliance, are really secondary to this overriding question.

From this standpoint, we are concerned that the French decisions announced last month might prejudice negotiation towards an eventual European settlement. We cannot yet, of course, foresee all the political consequences of the French move. I recognize that there are those who see in the French action in making substantial changes in the nature of their participation in the alliance the possibility of somehow facilitating a European settlement.

It is difficult, however, to find satisfactory evidence that the measures of military integration involved in NATO have really prevented movement towards a European settlement. It is equally difficult to find evidence for the belief that what the French have done could be a breakthrough on the very difficult questions of European security in the broader sense and of German reunification.

We must pose the question whether more progress towards a settlement with the Soviet Union can be made by the action of an individual nation or by action based on policies agreed to beforehand and co-ordinated among members of the alliance.

It has been emphasized a good deal both in France and elsewhere, in support of the recent French actions, that general international conditions have changed a good deal since NATO was created in 1949. This is true, but not necessarily relevant to the basic question of whether the pooling of resources and the creation of an effective international defence system in peacetime serve the long-term military and political interests of the participating states. Perhaps in recent years NATO has been too hesitant in bringing about changes in the existing arrangements to reflect changes in the relative strength of some members and new military and political developments. Surely changes are possible, however, without requiring withdrawal by one member from peacetime military integration.

It has also been claimed that the threat of war leading to the creation of NATO has dissipated and that the Soviet Union has many preoccupations other than Europe. It may be true that the Communist states have given up their hopes for an early triumph of Communism in Western Europe and that both the ideological tone of discussions and inter-state relations have improved. The Russians have advanced in some ways which are welcome to the West, but little change can be found in their basic policies on a settlement for Europe.

We must set alongside whatever evidence there may be of softening in Soviet attitudes the incontrovertible evidence brought forward by military specialists that, in the real terms of modern military power, there has been no weakening or withdrawal in the Soviet position.

A great deal has been made also of claims about a supposed loss of sovereignty or of scope for effective international action because of participation in the international organization set up under the North Atlantic Treaty.

It is quite true that NATO nations, by the free exercise of their sovereignty, chose to enter into an alliance in the pursuit of certain common and overriding interests. They may have had to give priority to these interests in some cases over other national interests. But the alliance has scarcely become a political strait-jacket because of this. Indeed, critics of NATO on other occasions have pointed out that, on many matters involving the commitments of members elsewhere in the world or their relations with the Communist nations, there has been a considerable diversity in viewpoint.

Even if there has been room for diversity, of course, NATO countries have remained firmly together on the main issues of East-West relations. Recent French actions have created concern in the minds of some that French views might change on some of these main issues. In this connection, I am glad to note that Premier Pompidou indicated in a statement in the National Assembly on April 13 that there was no question of France reversing its stand on basic questions in East-West relations. This assurance has been particularly important, since it has come more or less on the eve of the trip of the French President to the Soviet Union.

It is certainly our hope that France will continue to identify itself with the points of view which have characterized the thinking of NATO members. It will be the objective of Canadian diplomacy to help ensure that the area of agreement between France and its allies is maintained and extended. It will equally be our objective to ensure that there are as few obstacles as possible to France's full partnership, if it decides in the future that an altered organizational structure really does serve France's interests.

I do not want to overemphasize the seriousness of certain problems when we are still at an early stage in assessing them. I would hope that, even if a policy of full withdrawal from military integration is pursued by the French Government, means will be found to work out co-operative relationships between France and the organization in the defence field which will mitigate to some extent the effects of that withdrawal.

I do want to emphasize what I have said about continuing to develop our relations with France. I have questioned the reasons brought forward so far by the French Government in support of their decision concerning NATO's integrated structure. It is very important, however, that this decision and our views about it should be seen in the framework of our general relations with France and of our esteem for the President of France.

We must always remember that we have a debt of gratitude to General de Gaulle for his contribution to our victory during the last war. He was the soul, the personification, the symbol of resistance. It was thanks to him that at the end of the war France was in her rightful place, with her traditional allies.

We must remember also that, as very few men have been able to do during their lifetime, at another critical hour in the history of his country, General de Gaulle intervened in a decisive fashion to set France on the path of stability, confidence and pride.

General de Gaulle belongs to the Western civilization and to the Atlantic community. He has contributed in unique fashion to its strength. We can join with the French people in paying tribute to his great achievements.

The peoples of Canada and France are forever conscious of the fact that twice in as many generations they have gone through the trial of war together. The essential point perhaps here is not so much that side by side we met the supreme trial that countries can face but that we committed our very national existence to the defence of the same values. France and Canada stand for the independence of nations large and small alike and for the supremacy of the spiritual values embodied in the individual. No country in the world can claim, over the centuries, to have done more than France to promote these fundamental principles of our civilization. For this and other reasons, we cherish our association with France.

When we consider France's views on NATO integration, we can have our doubts as to their validity, tactical or otherwise, but we do not question France's dedication to the ideals which have been the inspiration of her life and which have provided the basis for the partnership between France and Canada.

In entering upon the negotiations with France which will define her new position in the alliance, we seek sensible and effective arrangements which will enable us to advance towards the goals which we both acknowledge and we are both anxious to serve. There will

no doubt be difficulties and problems but there is much in common between us. We have no desire, therefore, to stress unduly what may turn out to be, if we are careful, temporary and relatively limited differences. We must not overlook the opportunities which may yet lie ahead for the improvement of the alliance and its organizations and for joint action in support of our common beliefs.

Beyond the immediate questions of removal of bases and the reorganization in the defence structure of the alliance, there lie the broader questions of NATO policy and of our relations with France. These call for a great effort to find ways of continuing to work together towards the objectives of Western policy in the Atlantic and European areas. They require an effort of statesmanship on the part of national leaders to ensure that we do not lose sight of the ultimate goals of the alliance - security, peace and partnership, and the final achievement of stability in an area of the world which has always been of vital interest to Canada.

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