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NATO: THE STATE OF THE ALLIANCE

Speech by the Honourable Paul Martin, Secretary of State for External Affairs, at the International Day Meeting of the Rotary Club of Windsor, November 23, 1964.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I welcome this opportunity of speaking to you on the state of the North Atlantic Alliance. Canada has a vital stake in the welfare of the Alliance. We are not only one of its founder members but played an acknowledged part in bringing it into being. As Lord Ismay, the first Secretary-General of NATO, once put it, it was Canada which was responsible for turning "a general reflection into a practical possibility". I would go beyond that and say that the North Atlantic Alliance represents a conception that is responsive in a special way to Canada's own historical experience and provides a framework in which Canada is able to play a useful independent role as a responsible middle power.

There is at present much talk of a crisis in the Alliance. But we must not be unmindful that there has been talk of a crisis in the Alliance, off and on, for a number of years. This is essentially a matter of semantics and, while I would not wish to discount in any way the seriousness of some recent developments, I do not think that talk of crisis helps us very much towards a practical appreciation of the state of the Alliance. Such an appreciation, in my view, must be based on two propositions:

First, the common interests of the members of the Alliance in the face of the major problems confronting us -- including those of defence -- continue to be preponderantly greater than the differences that separate us. I say this not in any spirit of complacency but as a statement of simple fact.

Second, there have inevitably been changes in the relationships within the Alliance over the 15 years in which it has been in existence. The changes, which are related essentially to the economic recovery and political resurgence of Western Europe, should not be looked at as being detrimental to the interests of the Alliance. On the contrary, they are calculated to increase its resilience and its strength. They do, however, point to the need for some rethinking of the arrangements of the Alliance, and that, as I see it, is the task upon which we must now embark as a matter of urgency.

If there have been changes within the Alliance there have also, of course, been changes in the context in which the Alliance is operating. The Soviet world is no longer anything like the monolithic entity it was in the early stages of the cold war confrontation. There has been an element of reassertion of national identity and national interest in the countries of Eastern Europe. There has also been a growing rift between the Soviet Union and China, a rift which ostensibly relates to ideological interpretation, but into which factors of national interest also enter to a very considerable degree. The Soviet Union itself is facing many of the problems of a sophisticated modern economy -- the problem of growth, the problem of technological change, the problem of reconciling competing claims on a limited aggregate of resources, and the problem of adapting traditional doctrine to the dictates of practical reality. The Soviet Union also faces the manifold problems and responsibilities that go with great-power status and great-power commitments in a rapidly changing world.

All this has tended to alter the configurations of the cold war. The development of a more extensive pattern of economic, cultural and scientific exchanges between the Soviet world and the West is evidence of this. So is the agreement on a limited nuclear test ban which was signed in Moscow in August of last year and to which 107 countries have now adhered. But we cannot afford to lose sight of the obverse side of these developments. We cannot afford to lose sight of the fact that, as little as two years ago, the Soviet Union was apparently ready to plunge the world into nuclear conflict. We cannot lose sight of the fact that there has been no significant reduction in the Soviet forces facing the Alliance. We cannot afford to lose sight of the fact that there is continuing deadlock between us and the Soviet Union on the crucial problems that divide us -- on disarmament, on German reunification, on Berlin. We are hopeful that these problems may be amenable to a reasonable solution through patient negotiation, and that is the policy we are pursuing through the Alliance. We are also hopeful that the change in the leadership of the Soviet Union will not diminish the readiness of that country to negotiate with us in a positive spirit. For the moment, however, I can see no reason why we should not continue to be vigilant in our policies. Nor do I think this is a time when we can afford to be indifferent to the state of the Alliance on which, individually and collectively, we depend -- and will continue to depend -- for our security.

One of the central features of the Alliance has, of course, been the United States commitment to the defence of Europe. At the present time, the United States is maintaining close to 400,000 fully-equipped men in Europe, and these forces are backed by the overwhelming power of the United States strategic nuclear deterrent. There is no one in Europe, I think -- and M. Pompidou, the Prime Minister of France, affirmed this only the other day -- who would dispute the fact that the defence of Europe would be impossible in present circumstances without this United States commitment.

If that is accepted, what then is the meaning of what has been called "the European revolt against the American nuclear monopoly"? The answer, I suggest, may be put as follows: The Europeans feel that there has been a change in the balance within the Alliance. Specifically, they would argue that Europe is now immensely more stable, more prosperous and more powerful than it was in 1949, when the Alliance was founded. They would argue further that this dictates

a review of the arrangements of the Alliance with the object of enabling them to participate in a more meaningful way in the nuclear decisions of the Alliance. There has also been a lingering and intermittent doubt in some European minds as to whether, in the face of potential retaliation against its own cities, the United States would, in fact, be prepared to use its nuclear deterrent unequivocally in the defence of Europe in the event of a nuclear attack.

I have spoken of the European point of view generally because I believe it is true to say that many of the major European countries feel that, in one way or another, the arrangements of the Alliance should reflect greater recognition of European aspirations and of European security requirements. That view has, of course, been held most strongly by France, which believes that these requirements can be met only in the context of a purely European defence policy and which has proceeded in that belief to build up its own national nuclear force.

For its part, the United States is prepared to recognize what Mr. W.W. Rostow, the Chairman of the Policy Planning Council of the State Department, described in a speech last June as the "natural desire of major European countries to play a larger role in strategic deterrence". It is the American view that the best way of meeting that desire is by closer integration and not by a fragmentation of nuclear capabilities, which, they feel, is a course that would be bound to have undesirable implications for the political posture of the Alliance. The concept of closer military integration, I might say parenthetically, is one to which the Canadian Government fully subscribes.

It is against this background that the proposal has been put forward for the establishment of a multilateral force. Such a force would comprise up to 25 surface ships, manned by mixed crews, and carrying a total of 200 "Polaris" missiles. The force would be owned and financed jointly by the contributing countries and controlled by them. In putting forward this proposal, the United States have argued that it would do three things:

First, it would add to the total strategic strength of the Atlantic Alliance.

Second, it would give the Europeans a real share in strategic planning and a voice in the control of the strategic deterrent in time of crisis. By doing this, it would also diminish the risk of further proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Third, it would give tangible substance to the United States commitment to Europe, and thus to the concept of transatlantic integration.

It is only fair to say that, while this multilateral-force project has commended itself to a number of European countries (notably Germany), it has recently engendered considerable opposition in France. The French have argued that such a project would not give Europeans any real control over the bulk of the strategic forces of the Alliance, which are American; that it is

incompatible with the French concept of European defence; that it would be specifically incompatible with the spirit of the Franco-German Treaty of Alliance which was signed in January 1963; and that, for all these reasons, it is more likely to divide than to reinforce the Alliance.

In recent weeks there has seemed to be a serious risk that these conflicting points of view on the multilateral force might be heading towards a collision. There were reports that France might consider withdrawing from NATO -- if not from the Alliance as such -- if the agreement to set up the multilateral force were proceeded with on the basis then under discussion. Since then there has been general agreement not to press forward with this project by any particular deadline. This is a turn of events which we in Canada welcome. It will allay, for the time being at least, the risk of irreparable damage being done to the unity and integrity of the Alliance. It will give all of us pause for further thought as to how these problems -- which, of course, transcend the issue of the multilateral force -- can best be tackled. And it will provide the new British Government with an opportunity to formulate ideas which they are known to be formulating and which, as the British Prime Minister suggested in his speech at the Lord Mayor's Banquet a week ago today, would be aimed at underpinning the concept of collective security in an interdependent alliance.

Against this general background, I think it would be useful for me to set out clearly the Canadian approach to the Atlantic Alliance and to the problems it faces at this time. We have never accepted the limitation of purpose that is implicit in any definition of NATO as being solely a military alliance directed to the defence of Europe. Rather, we have looked upon it as an instrument for bringing together the Atlantic nations in an Atlantic community united as closely as possible in policy and in purpose. That is why we have always attached the utmost importance to the broadest possible range of consultation on the problems confronting the countries of the Alliance, and why the name of Canada has been particularly associated with those provisions of the North Atlantic Treaty which envisage co-operation in the non-military sphere.

It is inherent in our historical experience and evolution that we should regard as vital the transatlantic nature of the Alliance. As the Prime Minister put it when he opened the ministerial meeting of the NATO Council in Ottawa in May of last year: "The Atlantic nations must come together in one Atlantic community. The West cannot afford two such communities, a European one and a North American one, each controlling its own policies and each perhaps moving away from the other as the common menace recedes". We do not believe, therefore, that continentalism, whether European or North American, is compatible with the Canadian interest.

We also do not believe that in the nuclear age the continental approach provides an effective answer either to the defence of Canada or to the defence of the Alliance, which, in our view, are indivisible. We would be concerned, therefore, about any trend towards the fragmentation of Atlantic defence. We would be particularly concerned if such a trend were to affect the pre-eminent part which the United States has played and is bound to continue to play in ensuring our collective security. By the same token, we could not conceive of an effective

Alliance in which France was not participating in a way that was commensurate with her position in the world or in which there was an irretrievable cleavage between France and her NATO partners. We regard the contribution of France as essential to the Alliance and she forms, as Mr. St. Laurent once put it, "an integral part of the framework of our international life".

We acknowledge the claims of the European members of the Alliance to a greater degree of participation in the nuclear arrangements of NATO. We still think that these claims can be met within the existing machinery of the Alliance. We shall be exploring our ideas with our friends and partners over the next few weeks. We believe, above all, that we must now embark on a real dialogue between those holding different views as to the best way of providing for our collective security. I need hardly say that the outcome of that dialogue will be of crucial importance to Canada, as it will to the Alliance as a whole.

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