



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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Translation of a speech by the Prime Minister,
Mr. St. Laurent, delivered in French at a
Richelieu Club luncheon, in Montreal, on
March 5, 1949.

I am glad to have this opportunity of addressing the members
of the Richelieu Club of Montreal.

I need not praise the Richelieu Clubs. Although established
only three years ago, they have already shown their mettle. They have
rapidly multiplied across the Provinces of Quebec and Ontario, from
Ottawa to Rimouski and from Sudbury to Chicoutimi.

As you know, it was in the federal capital that the Richelieu
Clubs originated. I see evidence in this fact of the desirability for
all Canadians to have contacts between the various provinces for the
mutual benefit of all. In it also I see evidence of the impossibility of
confining to the Province of Quebec those Canadians who speak my language
and belong to my religion; wherever they go, French-speaking Canadians
make an important contribution to our national life. The 26 Richelieu
Clubs which already exist (and I am told that others are about to be
organized) play a leading role in the social and educational spheres and
especially in the protection of needy children.

Our democratic system implies that all citizens should do their
part for the general welfare, and it is stimulating to think that our
professional and business men gather in such clubs, the aims of which
are so commendable and praiseworthy.

Your motto "Peace and Fraternity" shows the nobility and
generosity by which you are prompted, Gentlemen, and you will readily
understand why I have deemed it advisable to talk to you today of the
great problem of peace, which is no doubt always present in your minds.

This problem is one in which we are all interested and which
affects not only the citizens of today but also those of tomorrow towards
whom you are devoted. I can assure you that in spite of the false rumors
which certain people are spreading about me, there is nothing that I
have more at heart than the preservation of peace in the world.

When I say that I have nothing more at heart than peace, I
know that all honest Canadians will believe me because they know that I
am five times a father and thirteen times a grandfather. I shall never
forget the anxieties my wife and I went through while our son was
serving on the high seas aboard a Canadian corvette and I can assure
you that as long as I head the Government I shall spare no effort, I
shall do everything in my power to avert the threat of a new conflict.
I do not want to experience again the same anxieties, neither do I want
my children to experience them, and I wish also to spare them to all my
fellow-countrymen. I was not the only one to go through such an experience.
Many of my best friends have had a son killed or injured, and some of
them even died of grief. I have visited enough veterans' hospitals to
know what sad train of physical and moral sufferings war leaves behind it.

I know that during the last conflict, hundreds of thousands of Canadians have had either a husband, a son or a brother engaged in the armed forces, and that they do not wish the tragedy of these last years to repeat itself. There is nothing that our fathers and mothers desire more than the preservation of peace.

The Canadian people are not warlike. They have never sought war and I am convinced that they will never seek it. We cannot live shut off from the rest of the world. I need not tell you that, on account of the systematic obstruction by a great power, added to its ill-will and frantic ambitions, it cannot be said that there is security in the world today. The international situation is not desperate but it is undoubtedly serious.

Of course war is avoidable and I am convinced that if we pursue the firm policy which is ours, at present, we shall avoid war. We would show a lack of the most elementary realism were we to consider it an impossibility. Let us pray that war be spared by Providence to the men and women of our generation and of many more generations to come. Let us not forget however the wisdom of the old saying: "God helps those who help themselves".

Faced with this growing insecurity, all nations who are anxious to preserve peace and safeguard their democratic and Christian institutions are bound to take together the measures which are essential to avert the growing menace of totalitarian and imperialistic communism. The Christian nations have not lost hope of seeing, some day, the triumph of the universal principles of the San Francisco Charter. But they are all conscious of the necessity for them, until these ideals finally materialize, to ensure their security through the conclusion of regional pacts such as the North Atlantic Pact.

As far as I am concerned, I am convinced that the best and most practical means of preserving the peace is to achieve union between all peace-loving nations as soon as possible.

It is not enough to have right on our side; we must also have the necessary strength to ensure that it is respected. Only union can provide us with the required strength. Because I am convinced of that, I deem it my duty to spare no effort, with my fellow-countrymen as well as with the governments concerned, to obtain the early establishment of such a system of alliances.

We do not want a third world war. We wish to go on living in peace with those who are dear to us. We must do everything to avoid a new catastrophe.

You all know that Great Britain, France, Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg have signed the Brussels Treaty. You know that the Brussels Treaty is a guarantee for these members of the Western Union, of the closest political, economic and military co-operation. These European nations, weakened by the last war, are no more able to ensure by themselves their own security and the preservation of international peace than the United States or Canada alone. This is why it is important to achieve union of all these nations as soon as possible through a powerful system of collective security.

In that spirit, representatives of Canada, the United States and the Western Union countries have already been studying for several months the possible terms of a North Atlantic Security Pact.

I hope that these talks, now taking place in a cordial atmosphere will bring about the negotiation of a treaty. Once its clauses have been defined, the Canadian Parliament, as far as our country is concerned, will be called upon to accept or reject them. You will

all admit, I think, that our geographic position, our historic ties, our security and our Christian traditions demand that Canada take a place within this community of European nations. It is a secret to no one that the communist leaders of the Soviet Union are dreaming of world domination. To achieve this end, they rely as well on the weakening of the democracies as on the might of their own armies. Well, I am convinced that if we take the proper steps to make ourselves and the Charter respected, the democracies will convince the communist leaders that it would be impossible for them to win any war which they might precipitate, and, realistic as they are, they will launch no war which they are not confident of winning.

What I wish to emphasize again, what I wish to say once and for all is that if we want to be strong, it is not with the intention of waging war but solely of preventing it.

The tragedy of the subjugation of one nation after the other by a dictatorship must not repeat itself. Should it happen again, the sufferings of invaded peoples and the losses of the liberating armies would be much more considerable than in the last conflict.

A new conflagration would ruin us economically and would shatter the whole economy of the world, but the ruins it would accumulate would not be confined to the economic sphere. With atomic and bacteriological weapons, a new war would probably bring about the destruction of civilized mankind. If, unhappily, war should again break out, the United States and the Soviet Union would inevitably be involved. In such an event, we could not remain neutral. We are in fact situated between these two Great Powers and, whether we like it or not, war would be at our doorsteps. It would not be merely a conflict between these two states, but a conflict between a communist and atheistic world and our democratic and Christian civilization. Between these two ways of life we have no choice.

The religious persecutions which are now prevailing with increased fury in the countries behind the iron curtain are painful evidence that communist expansion is the most serious threat to our religious and civil liberties. I do not want Canada to become a new Hungary. It is because we wish to do everything in our power to ensure the preservation of our dearest institutions and our most sacred traditions that my colleagues and I are advocating the conclusion of the North Atlantic Security Pact. We are doing it frankly and openly in all provinces of Canada and in both languages.

We want peace. We want security. We want to be able to go on devoting our resources and energies to the preservation of the welfare and prosperity of our country.

It is in this spirit that we must envisage the North Atlantic Security Pact, the purpose of which, and the only purpose, is to ensure peace and brotherhood among men.