

External Affairs

over the magnificent results of the journey of our Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) into that part of the world.

I would go even further and say that our sense of understanding must even extend to the very people who we think threaten our peace. We cannot be soft-headed about this matter for power in the hands of irresponsible rulers could be dangerous to our peace. But while we need not be soft-headed, we should certainly be clear-headed. I agree that we must be careful and alert. But also we must not let fear freeze our diplomacy into immobility or fire it into panic action. The purpose of Canadian policy—and I do not think there is any division of opinion in this country about this—is not merely to build up military collective strength, important as that is. Our purpose is to work together with our friends in solving our own problems and also, if possible, to negotiate with those whom we fear, in solving those other problems which now divide the world. Canada is anxious to play its part also in this form of collective security, anxious to play its part in seeking, by negotiation, international solutions to differences, to seek them by negotiation from the strength, which we are now collecting, and with strength but also with wisdom, with a full realization of the calamitous result of failure, and in the hope that one day security will rest upon a stronger basis even than the certainty of massive retaliation, atomic retaliation if you like, against anyone who would break the peace; retaliation which would certainly annihilate the enemy but might also destroy ourselves.

Right Hon. L. S. St. Laurent (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I find myself at this moment in a position where I have to ask your indulgence and that of the house for a few minutes to speak of at least one of the unfortunate results of my trip around the world that has been referred to in so generous terms by my colleague, the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Pearson). International affairs are of such importance that any imprecision or ambiguity in language used about any of their aspects is apt to have very unfortunate consequences. I have to appear at this time before my colleagues in the position of a repentant offender asking the indulgence of his colleagues for his regrettable transgression on the basis of a humble confession of his error or mistake or lapse and on the basis of his genuine desire to clarify the situation and to dispel any of the anxieties or undesirable consequences resulting from the interpretation of too loose language he was unfortunate enough to use.

[Mr. Pearson.]

I am sorry that any of the things I am reported to have said in the East about China have given concern and caused controversy in this country. I am not going to attempt to say that I have been misquoted. I know that the gentlemen of the press who were there were honestly doing their best to report accurately and objectively the many questions in many forms that were put to me, sometimes with almost machine-gun rapidity, at press conferences or at the airfields as I alighted from the plane or was walking towards the plane to re-enter it. I am sure that they did attempt to reproduce what they understood me to have given as my answers and what they understood those answers to mean. I must and I do take the responsibility for any misinterpretation or misconstruction that could be put upon them because of their imprecision or their ambiguity.

There is one thing, however, about which I do feel quite sure that there was an inaccuracy. There was one report that I had said that I was sure we would have to recognize the present government of China as the government the people of China wanted. I feel quite sure I never would use those words intentionally because I never had that feeling about the present government of China. But I must have used some words almost like them since so many of these reporters have come out with that as their version of what they heard and understood, that I felt we would have to be realistic and recognize the government of China "as the government the people wanted."

I should not have said "the government the people wanted". What I had in mind was that, in spite of our dislike of any form of communist or totalitarian government, we could not expect to have to deal with the kind of government, representing the people on the other side, we would like them to have, the kind of government we would want them to have, but that we would have to deal with the government they had as a matter of fact, the government that was in control of the forces that were participating in the happenings that were causing such tension and such anxiety in the international field. That is what I meant. That is what I should have said in words that could not be mistaken or interpreted in any other way because I think that with such a statement there would have been little or no concern and little, if any, controversy about it in this country or anywhere else.

I am not going to read to the house the many editorials that have been published, but I take one that appeared in the Ottawa