

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES



INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
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NO. 50/50 REVIEW OF THE CURRENT INTERNATIONAL SITUATION

Statement by Mr. L.B. Pearson, Secretary of State for External Affairs, delivered at the Federal-Provincial Conference in Ottawa, on December 4, 1950.

The vital question at the present time, transcending immeasurably all other questions, is how great is the risk of a major war. At this particular moment, with developments in Korea and at the United Nations in a state of flux, it is particularly difficult to discuss this question with any degree of assurance or certainty. If hostilities cannot be localized in North Korea and if the fighting spreads over the border into Manchuria, the result may be an open war with the whole of Communist China. It is, furthermore, only safe to assume that Peking has risked armed intervention in Korea on the basis of assurances of assistance from the Soviet Union if the intervention should lead to military operations against the territory of China itself.

Therefore, a war with China might well result in Soviet assistance to the Chinese forces. The assistance might initially be indirect and "voluntary"; of a kind which the Chinese Communists claim they are giving North Korea and which could later be said not to constitute official intervention. But just as this kind of Chinese intervention in Korea has led to the danger of an open war with China, so similar Soviet intervention on behalf of China might lead to open war with the Soviet Union. It is to be hoped that the autocrats of the Kremlin understand this danger as well as we do.

At the moment, the focus of our hopes and fears is Korea. We must strive to find a solution to the grave and menacing problem that has arisen there. This will be no easy task. Before it can be done, moreover, there must be a stabilization of the military front in Korea on a line which can be firmly held. Our military advice gives us reason to hope that in spite of heavy initial losses before the counter-offensive from the North, such a line can be established and maintained.

When this has been done, we can then see where we are, in regard to the political aspects of the Korean and Far Eastern questions. The Chinese Communists have now made it abundantly clear that they regard United Nations action in Korea as something that menaces their interests so greatly that they are willing to risk a general war in challenging it. Therefore, as soon as circumstances make it possible, we must take up again the effort to reconcile on the one hand the determination of the United Nations to resist aggression, and on the other whatever legitimate interests the Chinese may have in the future of Korea and