

MR. PEARSON'S STATEMENT ON FORMOSA

IN HOUSE OF COMMONS: "It remains the view of the Government that the final disposition of Formosa should be dealt with by international negotiation, at a conference, if you like, on Far Eastern Affairs, if one could be held," said the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. Lester B. Pearson, in the House of Commons on January 25, in a statement on Formosa.

He was answering, specifically a question by the Leader of the CCF Party, Mr. M. J. Coldwell, and replying at the same time to a question asked the day previous by Mr. John Diefenbaker, Progressive Conservative Member for Prince Albert, Sask.

Mr. Pearson, after referring to the message sent to Congress by the President of the United States dealing with the situation in the Formosa straits, proceeded, in part:

DEEPLY CONCERNED

"Although we are not involved in United States commitments in this area, we are of course deeply concerned over the dangerous situation existing there and we, with other free Governments, are anxious that steps should be taken to bring to an end the fighting which has now been taking place for some time along the China coast.

"In this message the President of the United States referred to the possibility of action by the United Nations to bring about a ceasefire. The United Nations has, in Indonesia, Palestine and in other parts of the world, been successful in bringing to an end fighting which might have had dangerous consequences, and if it could achieve similar results in this case it would be a cause, I am sure, of great satisfaction to us all....

"While it is not proper for me to comment on United States policy in this matter which is now being considered by Congress, I think I can say that any move or proposal within the United Nations or through diplomatic channels which could serve to achieve the purpose as stated in the President's message 'to improve the prospects of peace in the area' will be warmly welcomed by the Parliament and by the people of this country.

"Before the Korean armistice I expressed on more than one occasion in this House the view of the Canadian Government that Formosa should be neutralized as far as possible while hostilities continued in Korea.

"We thought then, and we think now, that the final disposition of Formosa should be a subject to be discussed at a conference on Far Eastern problems which at that time we thought

might be held after the cessation of fighting in Korea. That was the view adopted by the political committee of the United Nations General Assembly on January 13, 1951.

"Despite developments since then, it remains the view of the Government that the final disposition of Formosa should be dealt with by international negotiation, at a conference, if you like, on Far Eastern problems, if one could be held. Certainly, in any decision regarding the future of Formosa the wishes of the people there, which are often forgotten in discussions of this matter, should be a primary consideration. Pending such a decision I think that a strong case can be made for the neutralization of Formosa both in order to prevent any assault upon it by Communist forces and also so that it will not be used as a base for invasion of the mainland.

"In this area of tension and danger a distinction can validly be made between the position of Formosa and the Pescadores and the islands off the China coast now in Nationalist hands. The latter are indisputably part of the territory of China; the former, Formosa and the Pescadores, which were Japanese colonies for fifty years prior to 1945 and had had a checkered history before that, are not.

COASTAL ISLANDS

"I suggest therefore that the considerations which recommend the neutralization of Formosa and the Pescadores do not necessarily apply to the coastal islands so close to the mainland and a hundred miles or so away from Formosa.

"Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I welcome that part of the President's message which looks to the redeployment of the Nationalist forces which are now in these islands.

"Some of these forces', the President's message states, 'are scattered throughout smaller off-shore islands as a result of historical rather than military reasons directly related to defending Formosa.'

"My understanding of the basis of a truce or ceasefire is that neither the Nationalists, the Government of China which we recognize, nor the Communists need be asked to give up their claims on the territory now held by the other side. What they would be asked to give up of course is the use of military means to achieve their aspirations. In other words, negotiations for a ceasefire need not involve any question of the final disposition of the territory in dispute; for in our view this is a suitable matter for international negotiation at a later date through the United Nations or otherwise...."