



## STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION  
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
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No. 50/46      Statement on the Question of Duties of States in the Event of the Outbreak of Hostilities, made in the First (Political and Security) Committee on November 7, 1950, by Mr. L.B. Pearson, Secretary of State for External Affairs, and Chairman of the Canadian Delegation to the United Nations General Assembly.

There has been considerable discussion of the Yugoslav resolution; the purposes and objectives of which we must all support. There has not been so much discussion of the Soviet resolution which lays down certain provisions for defining aggression. These are taken from a Soviet resolution discussed many years ago at the League of Nations - but they omit one very important provision of that resolution which attempted to define "indirect aggression", the form of aggression which in the circumstance of our time, is most dangerous and which has been recognized as such by the United Nations. As a matter of fact aggression of the old type, after a declaration of war with armies crossing frontiers without attempting to conceal or excuse that fact, may be as out of date as the charge of the Light Brigade.

As international affairs become more complex, there is a temptation to seek refuge from the continual acts of judgment which complicated and dangerous situations demand and to substitute for them automatic provisions which will render separate judgments unnecessary. This tendency is seen, I think, in extreme form in the Soviet resolution which attempts by way of two schedules of minute particularity to set up automatic criteria for determining the aggressor in any international conflict. The previous attempts of this kind which have been made have been so protracted and inconclusive, notably in the discussions at Geneva over the Geneva Protocol, as was well pointed out by the delegate of Colombia, that the Canadian Delegation are sceptical whether such automatic action can ever be successfully achieved and in a way to satisfy the demands of justice.

The difficulties in the way are well illustrated if we test the criteria which have been proposed by the Soviet Delegation by attempting to apply them to certain concrete historical situations, the details of which are familiar to us. It is common ground, I take it, that in the war which opened in 1939, Nazi Germany was the aggressor. Yet if we apply retrospectively the criteria proposed by the Soviet Delegate and examine the historical evidence in that light, we will find ourselves in considerable confusion. It will be recalled that it was the United Kingdom and France which formally declared war on Germany rather