

MR. PEARSON ON SOVIET PROPOSALS

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS DEBATE: The Soviet Union's suggestion that it join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was dealt with in the House of Commons on April 1 by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. L.B. Pearson, as he concluded this year's Parliamentary debate on external affairs. The debate continued over six days. On the Soviet Union proposal, Mr. Pearson said:

"This proposal, as I understand it, and there has not been much opportunity for very careful study of it as yet, has a direct relationship to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and is of considerable interest to all the members of that organization. Therefore, I assume that the questions with which it deals will be discussed at the forthcoming meeting of the North Atlantic Council. That, I believe, is the appropriate forum for international consultation on this matter in so far as international consultation is concerned. But I can say this at this time that no one, I am sure, desires to reject any proposal out of hand which has any chance of bringing about good results."

COMMUNICATION

"In my view nothing could be more serious or more dangerous than a more or less final acceptance of the failure of man's ability to communicate with man, across whatever barriers - be they social or political - or whatever curtains - be they of metal, or propaganda, or tradition - which may exist today. In a world of hydrogen weapons, genuine misunderstandings, if they become hardened into a despondent belief on either side that sincere negotiations were impossible, could have nothing but tragic consequences for everybody."

"Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I should add this. While the West cannot afford to reject out of hand and without consideration any serious proposals for settlement that the Soviet Union may propose, it is equally obvious that we cannot afford to fall into propaganda traps. Both the timing and the substance of the new Soviet proposals suggest that they may be designed chiefly to cause a delay in the ratification and implementation of the treaty to establish the European Defence Community. As has already been made abundantly clear, the Canadian Government supports that project and hopes that it will be implemented without delay. The West cannot afford to put off decisive acts which are necessary for our own self-defence merely in exchange for Soviet words or promises."

"Falling into such an obvious trap would, of course, be dangerous. We must be prepared to examine Soviet proposals and to negotiate patiently whenever there seems any prospect that negotiations may prove fruitful, but we must do this while maintaining, until they are

shown to be unnecessary, policies which we have adopted with our friends as being needed for our collective defence.

"Certainly at first sight the Soviet suggestion that they join NATO seems to be a somewhat surprising and indeed an almost disingenuous one. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is based on mutual trust between governments and peoples who share many fundamental aspects of a common civilization, and who have demonstrated their desire and ability to work together. Moreover, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is more than a military alliance. It is more than a collective security organization."

"It is worth remembering, also, that we and the Soviet Union and all the members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization belong to a universal collective security organization in the United Nations, and if the Soviet Union is now prepared to make this organization effective we should certainly welcome that and the possibilities for co-operation in this field. The universal basis is there, and has been there since the United Nations was founded."

UNITED NATIONS

"To the extent that we can have confidence in our ability, through the United Nations, to make war impossible, the defence aspects of NATO become less important. If the danger of aggression is entirely removed, then the defence aspects of NATO become unnecessary and could be replaced by a United Nations arrangement."

"We in this Government have never, I believe, concealed our view that the military alliance aspects of NATO are a second-best, a regrettable, and we hope a temporary necessity. Our real objective, and this applies, I am sure, to all hon. members in this House, is and has been to secure a safe and peaceful world, with collective action in all fields and international co-operation generally organized through the United Nations. Certainly that objective is far from being achieved or even approached at the present time. Therefore, surely it would be folly for us to lower our guard so long as the present danger exists."

"I am not asserting that the professed Soviet desire in this proposal to join with the West in effecting arrangements for collective security is completely insincere. I do not know. I may perhaps be giving hon. members a somewhat pessimistic first interpretation, though this seems to be justified by the proposal itself and the experiences we have had."

"But I think one can be pretty sure of this, that it would be fatuous to suppose, after the events of the last ten years, and while millions of people in Europe are held in subjection, that the fears and suspicions which Soviet actions have engendered in the