

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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An address by Mr. L.B. Pearson, Secretary of State
for External Affairs, to the Montreal Reform Club,
on April 29, 1950

The central political problem of our time is the relationship between the free Western world and the U.S.S.R. This question is under constant public discussion, in the press, on platforms and at unofficial conferences, open and private. You may be sure that the government is giving full and continual attention to this problem, anxious on the one hand to support any reasonable move towards a settlement and on the other to avoid any action that serves no other purpose than appeasement.

At the end of the war we had some reason to believe that our relations with the Russians might develop along normal friendly channels. We were all heartened by the magnificent achievements of the war-time alliance, and the tremendous co-operative effort from East and West alike which had crushed the Germans led us to believe that we could enjoy equally spectacular but more constructive efforts in peacetime co-operation. There is a moving and eloquent expression of this hope in a paragraph from Robert Sherwood's book on Roosevelt and Hopkins, a paragraph which in the light of what has happened has a grim poignancy.

"We really believed in our hearts that this was the dawn of the new day we had all been praying for and talking about for so many years. We were absolutely certain that we had won the first great victory of the peace - and, by 'we', I mean all of us, the whole civilized human race. The Russians had proved that they could be reasonable and far-seeing and there wasn't any doubt in the minds of the President or any of us that we could live with them and get along with them peacefully for as far into the future as any of us could imagine."

This hope has had to be deferred - and I use the term deliberately because I do not think we have had to abandon it because the U.S.S.R. in a most deliberate and calculating manner rejected the co-operation of the war-time period and set out upon a new course of action.

I think the Russians made their deliberate choice to reject co-operation with the West for a number of reasons. One of them springs from the Communist theory upon which their state is based. Their leaders have taught them that the Russian revolution is merely the beginning of a world revolution and that for this reason conflict between the Soviet State and the rest of the world is inevitable. They therefore set their people to work preparing for this conflict. At the same time, I think that they were influenced by expansionist traditions which go far back in the history of Soviet