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THE OLD AND THE NEW DIPLOMACY

Text of an address by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. L.B. Pearson, delivered at the 130th Annual Meeting of the Board of Trade, Saint John, New Brunswick, on January 28, 1952.

In these days when foreign policy is as close to home as the building of a post office, it is important to understand the principles and the practices that should guide it. In the past, foreign policy was usually formed and directed by governments in the interests of a dynasty or of a small minority. The people, as such, were neither very often consulted about nor supposed to be very much concerned with the mysteries that went on behind the Foreign Office walls. In a political democracy, however, this was not good enough, and foreign policy has now become the policy of all the people. This, in its turn, means that the people must be given the facts without which public opinion cannot be intelligently formed. Public opinion, however, must be not only informed, it must be responsible. This will not be easy if the spur for governmental action in international relations is mass emotion created by the publicity mechanisms, interested and disinterested, which can now be brought so quickly and so crushingly to bear on all the people. Fifty years ago men had time to think and to make up their minds in relative calm as to what was in the national interest. Their agents in government were also given time to reflect and to decide and to execute. We have now, I think, gone far, possibly too far to the other extreme. The insistent demand now in diplomacy and foreign policy is for "action this minute" and the trend is toward the "hoop-la" and the headline; toward conduct of delicate and complicated negotiations in the spotlight of press and radio publicity, or, worst of all, in front of the television camera. I am beginning to envy those quiet and restrained old-fashioned methods which it used to be the fashion to deride as tricky and undemocratic. Certainly it will become increasingly difficult to work out a wise and mature foreign policy based on sound public opinion when that opinion can be disturbed and distracted by all the mass media of propaganda which we now have brought to such mechanical perfection, and some at least of which seem designed to perpetuate the adolescent mind. This makes it all the more essential, in the testing days ahead, that not only governments, but those who control governments, the people, remain steady and calm and patient. That is not going to be easy when the tempo of life today is so fast, and nervous strain is so great, that we get impatient if we miss the first segment of a revolving door, and cancel our subscription if tomorrow's newspaper does not come out today.

This necessity for reflection before expressing opinions means that Foreign Ministers and the "spokesmen" for Foreign Ministers should resist the temptation to give off-the-cuff opinions on international developments as soon as they hear of them. It also means that newspapers should not expect a Foreign Minister, or one of his officials, to give them a "lead" on every important international development as soon as news of it comes over the ticker. In democratic countries we believe in the freedom of the press and the responsibility of the press, and I for one believe that a responsible free press is capable of giving an intelligent interpretation of, say, a new Russian proposal without benefit of a hasty, immediate expression of opinion by some Foreign Minister or official..

While haste and instability are bad, however, they should not be confused with flexibility. The latter, I think, is an important, almost an essential quality in diplomacy. Foreign policy should never get frozen or caught in a blind alley. We should always leave a line open for courageous advance or for honourable withdrawal; even in such things as our relations with Communist China or proposals to outlaw the atomic bomb. Policy can become frozen in many ways; by fear to act because of special or sectional pressures, by submission to the tyranny of slogans, of popular prejudices stimulated by wrong information. It can also be frozen by a stubborn refusal to change one's mind. There is a paragraph from General Stilwell's autobiography which amusingly illustrates this latter disability. It reads:

"I once took my family out for dinner at the San Diego Club, and told them to order whatever they wanted. The youngest boy, Ben six years old at once said, "Roast Duck!" That seemed a little heavy for his age, so I suggested cream of wheat. He leaned back and said "Duck". Then the family pitched in and suggested some nice spinach, or some vegetable soup and mashed potatoes. He said, "Duck", once more without budging. I made one more attempt, to which he answered "Duck", so I then wiped the perspiration off my brow and ordered duck. He had never heard of Joe Stalin, but he knew the technique. He'd make an excellent secretary of state but for the fact that he's going to be a doctor".

I'm afraid General Stilwell, in his admiration for his son, has indulged in a common error of mistaking obstinacy for determination.

Three of the important principles, then - and there are many others - underlying foreign policy should be responsibility, steadiness and flexibility. I suggest that we will need all of these in the days ahead. We will need also and especially patience and more patience, because the menace which faces us is not likely to disappear soon, and we would be well advised to settle down for a long hard pull. General Marshall said not long ago that the best we can hope for in the years ahead is a long period of increasing tension. Continuing, let alone increasing tension is almost as hard on the nerves as war itself; sometimes it is even harder. If we are to prevent that tension deteriorating into war, we shall, for the time being, have to accept an international situation, largely determined by a deeply divided world, and within that context deal with the various proposals and plans that are put forward to ease the tensions with Soviet Russia.

We should certainly keep on trying in every possible and honourable way to do this but we should not expect any easy way out of existing difficulties or become unduly impatient or frustrated if the various moves that we make fail and we are rebuffed. It will be tempting to react to a rebuff by a tough and provocative retaliation. It is a temptation that must be resisted. There is something to be said in diplomacy for the velvet glove over the iron hand. There is nothing to be said for the iron glove over the velvet hand. It seems to me, therefore, that we would be wise, all of us, to adjust ourselves to the probability of the tensions and manoeuvrings of the present continuing for some time, and not to count on any magic formula to bring about a quick and general settlement. Our best course is to accept realistically the general over-all situation as it is, for purposes of policy and diplomacy, to get steadily stronger to meet its challenges, and keep on attempting to solve specific problems as opportunity offers, without undue elation when we succeed, or undue despair when we fail, which will, I fear, be our more common experience. In this way, the free world, while getting stronger militarily, will get stronger also in morale and staying power; and that is what is going to conquer in the end. One of the most experienced students of warfare now living, Captain Liddell Hart, expressed this view in an article not long ago, which included the following paragraphs:

"The study of war has taught me that almost every war was avoidable, and that the outbreak was most often produced by statesmen losing their heads, or their patience, and putting their opponent in a position where he could not draw back without serious loss of "face". Clumsy efforts to forestall a feared aggression have too often provoked it - particularly where politically-inspired moves have jumped beyond strategic possibilities.....

"But the best safeguard of all is for all of us to keep cool. Indignation and exasperation are primary risks, for such emotions are all too likely to produce a fatal explosion. Nothing can be more fatal than the feeling, "it's bound to come - let's get it over". War is not a way out from danger and strain. It's a way down into a pit of unknown depth.

"On the other hand, tension so intense as now is almost bound to relax eventually if war is postponed long enough. This has happened often before in history, for situations change. They never remain static. But it is always dangerous to be too dynamic, and impatient, in trying to force the pace. A war-charged situation can only change in two ways. It is bound to become better, eventually, if war is avoided without surrender".

It will be easier to apply these principles, if we do not forget that the military strength we are collecting in our North Atlantic coalition is not an end in itself, but merely a means to an end; the establishment of security by the negotiation of settlements. In other words, we are determined to use our strength solely for peace. If we use it for war, it will be because war was forced on us and we had no other course.

In working out policies, based on these principles, the North Atlantic coalition is today our main agency. In

joining that coalition, we have accepted certain formal commitments that would have been unthinkable fifteen years ago. They would have been equally, or even more unthinkable for some of the other members, notably the United States. The change is, I think, one measure of our growing maturity of outlook and of our recognition of the essential interdependence of all free peoples. We have learned, in Canada, from harsh experience in two wars, that the absence of a prior and formal commitment does not mean isolation from conflict; that, on the contrary, it is more likely to mean unprepared involvement, long months of getting ready after the fighting has begun, while a thin line tries to hold. Next time there may be no time and we cannot rely any longer on a thin line.

That is why the Atlantic democracies, in contrast to 1939, now seek strength and union before trouble begins in the hope that by doing so they can prevent it. Today NATO, which embodies that unity and is gathering that strength, is our greatest deterrent against aggression and, therefore, until the United Nations is permitted to operate as it was designed to operate, our best hope for peace. That is its only purpose and that is why it is consistent with and is complementary to the United Nations, on the Charter of which it is firmly based.

If, therefore, today the people of Canada are agreed, as they are agreed, to consider an attack on Norway or on Turkey as an attack on their own country, and are willing to accept commitments, political and military, to go to the help of the victim of that attack, it is solely because they hope by these pledges and the strength and resolve that lies behind them to make any such attack unlikely; or if it comes, unsuccessful. This surely is a better peace-policy for a state, than by isolation and weakness to encourage the aggressor to think he can pick off his victims one by one. The greatest provocation to Soviet Communist aggression today is not strength but weakness. We are removing that provocation.

In NATO, Canada is a member of an international team. It is not easy to work out by agreement the part that each member shall play on that team; the exact contribution that each shall make to the defence of all. In the NATO organization we discuss these matters continually and frankly, with the frankness of friends. The problem is not only one of increasing our strength but also of sharing the burden. The decision ultimately on what can and should be done must, of course, rest with the separate governments. NATO is not superstate. But in making its own decision each government is in honour bound to give due consideration to the advice and recommendations of the NATO agencies.

I can explain how this is done by describing what is going on at this moment. At the Ottawa meeting of the NATO Council in September last, we looked at the military plans and requirements drawn up by the Military Committee on which all the members are represented. It was felt then that these plans should be carefully reviewed by a group of highly competent political personages; that they should also analyze the capabilities, political and economic, of the separate countries and make recommendations as to what each might do to ensure the fulfillment of the plan by a given date. Because we are a 12-nation Council, all 12 governments were represented on this Committee. But because we knew that

12 was too large a number for effective investigation and report, in the time available, we agreed that there should be an executive committee of three full-time members to do most of the work. They were the "Three Wise Men". We had hoped for the report of the full Committee of Twelve for our Rome meeting last December, but this was impossible. However, by December 13 the draft of the Executive Committee's report was ready. That report was then given preliminary consideration by the 12 governments, but when the Committee of Twelve met a few days later, it was clear that more time would be needed to deal adequately with the important recommendations that had been made. Therefore, governments were given until the 15th January to submit their observations to the Executive Committee, who will consider them and then report to the Committee of Twelve.

As might have been expected, some recommendations in the report of the Three are being questioned by the various member states. Certainly some of them have been questioned by the Canadian Government in the observations we have forwarded to Paris, though many others were accepted. The Committee now has the job of hammering out by compromise and adjustment a final report for the North Atlantic Council meeting at Lisbon, which we hope will receive unanimous approval. If it doesn't, then any government objecting to any part of the report will explain its objections, and the Council will then consider the matter. This is, of course, a much longer and more difficult procedure than if the North Atlantic Council were a single dictatorship; a form of super-state. Stalin wouldn't take so long in telling the Poles, through Marshal Rokossovsky, what they were to do. But ours is the better way because the eventual result will be acceptable to all and will stick until it is changed by all.

Canada occupies, in a sense, a special position in NATO. We are not a member from Europe where the sense of imminent physical danger is always present and where for centuries the armed citizen has been accustomed to patrol the frontiers, just as he is now becoming accustomed to watch the skies. There is always for him this spur of present menace to speed defence preparations. Canada, however, is an overseas country, and for a hundred years has had a feeling of at least geographical security. Our lands have not been invaded or our cities bombed and despoiled. It is, therefore, the more to our credit that Canadians almost unanimously have realized that, if war cannot be prevented, and we hope and believe that it can, the first line of defence of Canada is across the ocean; that we are willing to take commitments in advance to make that defence effective.

The United States is in the same position as we are geographically, but not in any other way. She is the great leader, the super-state, with interests and responsibilities around the globe, with the leading voice, and rightly so, and with a major share in the decisions that have to be made. The burden of world power is always heavy and the price high. The United States has not been anxious to assume this role but, to her credit, and to our relief, she has accepted it and the price that goes with it.

But Canada is not a world power and our voice in the collective decisions reached and policies decided can only on rare occasions be a decisive one, though we can and do speak with enough vigour when the occasion seems to demand it and our voice is, I think, respected.

Furthermore, Canada is a young and growing, if not a great power. We are on the very threshold of stupendous national development, which will be of importance not only to ourselves but to the whole free world. With only 14 millions of people, we have half a continent to manage, and the riches of its soil to exploit for the common good. We are eager to take on all these new tasks, these challenging adventures in the building of this people into a great nation. But now we are forced to devote nearly half our budget to defence instead of to development.

We do this - without complaining - because it is our part of the NATO group insurance premium against war. It is a small price to pay for peace. Moreover, our contribution is, in my view, a fair share of the total premium. We do not need to apologize for our part in the common defence, which is our defence. Nor have our words, I think, except in the occasional peroration where I am as guilty as anyone, outstripped our deeds.

It is not however, easy to share the burden equitably in a costly and complicated international effort of this kind. I suppose that complete fairness in these matters is never possible. But in NATO we are trying to approach this ideal as closely as possible, having regard to all the circumstances, political, economic and psychological.

Our efforts in this regard will not, I think, be assisted by statistical and very often misleading exercises, comparing one country's defence effort with another country's, with a result that looks something like a National Hockey League standing. At the same time, it is obviously essential, if a coalition is to be held together, that each member should not only trust the others, but that each should deserve the others' trust. That cannot be secured except on the basis of an honest and fair contribution by each to the common effort.

Canada's participation in these NATO plans has been worked out in discussions with the other members of the coalition. We have taken certain definite commitments and will carry them out, subject to the changes which will undoubtedly require to be made from time to time. Our contribution takes, of course, many forms. There is one form which is not reflected in our defence expenditures at all; that is the building up of industry and the increased production of strategic materials. Both of these things would be of vital importance in war, and both are being vigorously pushed in this country. Then there are direct contributions of arms and equipment from our productive capacity, under Mutual Aid. This has been useful in the past year to certain European countries.

Finally, there has been our own direct defence build-up. The form that this should take has received, of course, long consideration here and also by the NATO agencies. One feature is the despatch in time of peace of Canadian forces overseas. This has been strongly recommended by NATO and accepted by us. The largest part of this overseas effort will take the form of fighter squadrons stationed in Europe, and this is proceeding according to plan. It is a form of defence for ourselves and assistance to Europe which, I think, will not be criticized in this country; indeed, it meets the specifications of certain of those who are criticizing other parts of our overseas effort.

A Canadian Brigade Group has also been stationed

in Europe. This was only done after consideration and approval by NATO military and political authorities, some of them, incidentally, with great military experience, whose advice must be respected. This was the way in which NATO and our own experts decided our contribution could most usefully be made at this time. It would also, of course, have been possible to have sent arms and equipment to the soldiers of Europe, and have kept our own men at home. This, however, would not have been the recommendation of NATO, and it would also, I think, have been contrary to our own best interests. It certainly would be disastrous for the common defence, if the United States decided to withdraw its troops and replace them by equipment for the Europeans. If I were a European, my reaction to that policy would be a vigorous one. On the other hand, the presence in Europe in peace-time of the forces of both their North American allies is tangible evidence that if - which God forbid - there should ever again be a Western Front, we will all be there from the beginning. There is nothing that can do more to strengthen the morale and the unity of the North Atlantic alliance than this conviction. In any event, Canadians are not, I think, a people who would desire their contribution to the strengthening of their own defences in Western Europe to take the form of arms alone, while other people provided the troops.

The important thing is, however, not so much the detailed manner in which we discharge our obligations, as the fact that we do so. Canada, I do not need to assure you, will not fail here. We are not accustomed to default on our obligations.

Those obligations, however, which are necessary both for our safety and our progress, will be heavy for some time to come. The day has certainly not yet arrived when their lessening will make it possible to transform defence expenditures into tax reductions.

In Canada today we are building, solidly and well, I think, for a good future, but neither this country nor any other country, will have a future at all if there is World War III. The prevention of that ultimate tragedy, therefore, is the goal of our foreign policy today and of all the actions and decisions that go to make it up.

Peace, I know, is, in a sense, more of a prayer than a policy. If so, it is a prayer which is in all our hearts and every move we make in the difficult days ahead must be devoted to its realization.
