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Pearson, Lester B., 1897-1972,
speaker
Excerpts from address by the Prime
Minister of Canada, the Right
Honourable Lester B. Pearson, on
accepting the 2nd Temple Universit

Canadian Consulate,
3 Penn Center Plaza,
Philadelphia 2, Pennsylvania.

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EXCERPTS FROM ADDRESS BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF CANADA,
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE LESTER B. PEARSON, ON
ACCEPTING THE 2ND TEMPLE UNIVERSITY WORLD PEACE AWARD
AT THE FOUNDER'S DINNER OF THE UNIVERSITY'S GENERAL
ALUMNI ASSOCIATION, PHILADELPHIA, APRIL 2, 1965

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. . . . Keeping the peace is the first and most difficult purpose of the United Nations. I have no doubt it will remain the yardstick by which the United Nations stands or falls, however legitimate and even compelling are the economic, social and ethical purposes which it is also called upon to serve. If we cannot manage our affairs peacefully in the short term, our long term goals will never be reached. . . .

We have now reached a critical stage in the development of the U.N.'s peace-keeping capacity. The organization is quite different from what it was in 1945, or in 1950, when it was able to mobilize under U.S. leadership collective resistance to aggression in Korea. The increase in the membership to more than double the original number, the nature of that increase and the diffusion of power amongst several regional groups have led to a corresponding decrease in the influence and authority of the Western states.

Nevertheless, the leadership in peace-keeping has come from the West, in close co-operation with the Secretary-General and with members of the non-aligned group. I would reject, however, the Soviet charge that, in this leadership, we had some special Western axe to grind. Indeed the Assembly approved by large majorities the assessment resolutions establishing collective financial responsibility for the operations in the Middle East and the Congo. What has happened is that since 1962 the balance of the membership has tended to take a more critical view of Great Power disputes over peace-keeping. They have begun to question whether, in the light of this disagreement, complete collective responsibility is often feasible in practice, however desirable it may always be in principle.

The facts of the matter tend to support the doubts expressed about this. There have been five major peace-keeping operations and not one of them has been collectively financed in practice, even though in two cases the World Court itself formally advised that the expenses were a joint responsibility. The loss of vote penalty against offenders has not been applied because these offenders have included two Great Powers and the bulk of the membership was not

... ..

prepared to force this issue. For this reason all peace-keeping operations, since the Congo operation was authorized in 1960, have been financed on some basis other than assessment of membership. In Cyprus, for example, the Force is financed on the basis of voluntary contributions. About a third of the members of the U.N. are contributing either personnel to the Force or money for its financing. Some, including Canada, are doing both.

This is not a satisfactory situation if one believes, as I do, that a threat to the peace anywhere in the world is of concern to all and that all should bear some responsibility for meeting the threat. But I acknowledge also that sovereign states cannot be coerced to take action to which they are opposed unless the Security Council so decides. It is unlikely so to decide in today's world. What we have a right to expect, however, is that no Great Power or group of Powers would actively thwart the expressed wishes of a majority that the U.N. should undertake a peace-keeping operation, especially if such Powers were not required positively to support the operation financially or in other ways.

The essential requirements are that the UN should be able to act in emergencies when it is feasible to do so and that as many countries as possible should be ready to respond to a duly authorized U.N. request for military assistance or financial support. Whatever the costs, they will be small compared to the costs of warlike co-existence in an unpoliced and disordered world. If we cannot make the U.N. work on the basis of Great Power co-operation, which is what we hoped to do at San Francisco, neither can we afford to let its purposes be frustrated by Great Power hostility or indifference. . . .

SITUATION IN INDO-CHINA

I would like now to turn to peace-keeping outside the United Nations, specifically to Indo-China. Canada has gained much experience in such peace-keeping through its participation, with India and Poland, during nearly eleven years, on the International Supervisory Commissions in the former Indo-China States of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. This experience has taught us to recognize the practical difficulties confronting peace-keeping operations. It has, however also shown us the contribution - at times the essential contribution - which can be made to peace and stability by international bodies of this kind.

Any objective evaluation of the work of the International Commissions in the three countries would show that, within the limits imposed upon them by the terms of the 1954 settlement, the Commissions accomplished a number of useful results, despite the obstructive efforts of the Government of North Vietnam.

The Vietnam Commission, of course, has had the most difficult time. There is, after all, something incongruous about a peace-keeping agency working in the midst of large-scale hostilities. We must remember, however, that the Commission was designed primarily to supervise the 1954 cease-fire agreement between the French Forces and the so-called People's Army of Vietnam. On the whole, it performed effectively most of its functions relating to the military clauses of this agreement. It was, however, not able to prevent the military build-up of North Vietnam, nor was it able to ensure that the inhabitants of the two zones were guaranteed democratic freedoms.

When a savage war broke out between the two Vietnams, the whole problem entered an even more difficult stage. What had been a Vietnamese war against a colonial power became a Communist attack against a Vietnamese state.

In this tragic conflict, the U.S. intervened to help South Vietnam defend itself against aggression and at the request of the government of the country that was under attack.

Its motives were honourable; neither mean nor imperialistic. Its sacrifices have been great and they were not made to advance any selfish American interest.

The Government and the great majority of the people of Canada have supported whole-heartedly U.S. peace keeping and peace making policies in Vietnam. We wish to be able to continue that support.

The International Commission had not been created to deal with the war situation that developed. It was in Vietnam to supervise a cease-fire which the two parties involved were charged to observe; not to maintain a peace, where one party - the Communist North Vietnamese regime - had no intention of living peacefully with its neighbour.

A handful of unarmed personnel belong to a Commission which was often paralyzed by the differences arising from its membership structure, obviously

could not thwart deliberate and well-planned policy of this kind. It could make open violations of the 1954 agreement somewhat more difficult but it could not make them difficult enough.

The Vietnam Commission, therefore, became virtually powerless.

The problem became not one of peace-keeping by an International Commission, but of peace-making by warring states. Unless that peace-making takes place, a war in Vietnam might well become a far wider and more terrible conflict.

Obviously the situation cannot be expected to improve until North Vietnam becomes convinced that aggression, in whatever guise, for whatever reason, is inadmissible and will not succeed. I hope that this conviction is growing in Hanoi. I hope they also realize that the only alternative to a cease-fire and a mutually acceptable settlement is chaos and disaster, and that North Vietnam would be a primary and tragic victim.

The universal concern which is being expressed about the tragedy of Vietnam is a reflection both of this fearful possibility and of that sense of world community to which I have referred. All nations watch with deep anxiety the quickening march of events in Vietnam toward a climax which is unknown but menacing. All are seeking solutions to the dilemma confronting us, because all would be involved in the spread of the war.

The dilemma is acute and seems intractable. On the one hand, no nation - and particularly no newly-independent nation - could ever feel secure if capitulation in Vietnam led to the sanctification of aggression through subversion and spurious "wars of national liberation".

On the other hand, the progressive application of military sanctions can encourage stubborn resistance; rather than a willingness to negotiate. Continued intensification of hostilities in Vietnam could lead to uncontrollable escalation.

SETTLEMENT IMPERATIVE

A settlement is hard to envisage in the heat of battle, but it is now imperative to seek one.

What are the conditions for such a settlement. First, a cease-fire, then negotiation?

Aggressive action by North Vietnam to bring about a communist "liberation", (which means communist rule) of the South must end.

Continued bombing action, however, against North Vietnam beyond a certain point may not bring about this result. Instead of inducing the authorities in Hanoi to halt their attacks on the South, it may only harden their determination to pursue, and even intensify, their present course of action.

The retaliatory strikes against North Vietnamese military targets, for which there has been great provocation, aim at making it clear that the maintenance of aggressive policies toward the South will become increasingly costly to the Northern regime.

I think, that after two months of air strikes, the message has been received "loud and clear". The authorities in Hanoi must know that the United States, with its massive military power, can mete out even greater punishment. They also know that, for this reason, the costs of a continuation of their aggression against South Vietnam could be incalculable.

If, however, the desired political response from Hanoi has not been forthcoming, which would indicate a change in policy, this may result from a desire to avoid what would appear to Hanoi to be the public humiliation of backing down under duress. The Northern communist regime is probably also under pressure from another direction to avoid the public abandonment of a policy which fits the Communist Chinese doctrine of "wars of national liberation".

If, then, a series of increasingly powerful retaliatory strikes against North Vietnam does not bring about this preliminary condition of a cease-fire, surely serious consideration must be given to every other way in which the stalemate might be broken.

There are many factors which I am not in a position to weigh. But there does appear to be at least a possibility that a pause in air strikes against North Vietnam at the right time might provide the Hanoi authorities with an opportunity, if they wish to take it, to inject some flexibility into their policy without appearing to do as the direct result of military pressure.

If such a suspension took place in a limited time, then the rate of incidents in South Vietnam would provide a fairly accurate way of measuring

its usefulness and the desirability of continuing it. I am not, of course, proposing any compromise on points of principle, not any weakening of resistance to aggression in South Vietnam. I merely suggest that a measured pause in one field of military action at the right time might facilitate the development of diplomatic resources which cannot easily be applied to the problem under existing circumstances.

Obviously, the objectives of any lasting settlement cannot be defined in detail at this stage. I think, however, that few would quarrel with President Johnson's view - that an honourable peace should be based on "a reliable arrangement to guarantee the independence and security of all in Southeast Asia". Both sides should examine the substance of a possible, rather than a perfect, settlement.

In doing so, we should realize that the crisis in Vietnam is, in part at least, a reflection of a broader conflict, and that a lasting resolution of the specific problem may be possible only within the framework of a much broader settlement. But one thing is certain: without a settlement guaranteeing the independence, neutrality and territorial integrity of North Vietnam's neighbours in Southeast Asia and without a willingness by all parties to respect and protect these, a continuation of the present fear and instability will be inescapable.

RESPONSIBILITY OF INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

The problem, therefore, remains the responsibility of the international community. The members of that community will therefore be obliged to make available the means of supervising any settlement and guaranteeing the fulfilment of its terms in spirit and in letter. The world community will also be obliged to assist in establishing the economic, as well as political foundations of future understanding and security. In this connection, I was encouraged by President Johnson's expression of the willingness of the United States to help in promoting economic and social co-operation in the whole area. This is important.

There is at present a U.N. project for social and economic enterprise going on in this part of the world: the Mekong River Project.

The Mekong River Basin embraces most of Indo-China, as well as

Thailand and a part of Southern China. In the U.N. project there are twenty-one states participating. They have merely scratched the surface of a development which could go far to lift up the standard of life of the people from deprivation, distress and hunger, towards comfort and decent living. It could do this; if given the opportunity and the resources. The amount now being spent in armed conflict in Vietnam and Laos over a few weeks could do the job and could help millions of people to a better life.

So I propose that the U.N. try to enlarge this project in a spectacular way, even while the political and military conflict is going on; that for this purpose, the U.N. call a conference of the states concerned - whatever their political relations - in order to make this part of Southeast Asia a centre of international, social and economic development. Finally, I propose that the U.N. Secretary-General, without delay, should visit the countries in question to pave the way for such a conference. I would like to see it held as soon as possible. Because China is not a member of the United Nations, a special development agency set up by the conference could extend the work now being done.

With this kind of great international development project, with a cease-fire followed by political negotiations, with the countries in the area given an international guarantee of neutrality and assurance of aid for peaceful development, then the danger, destruction and distress of the present hour might be replaced by peace, hope and progress.

I know that the policy and the effort of the government of the U.S.A. is directed to this end. Such an effort deserves and should receive the support of all peace loving people.

We in North America have a special duty and a special opportunity in this struggle for peace. We enjoy a high standard of material well-being and security with freedom. Our good fortune carries with it a corresponding obligation. At the moment, the most immediate obligation facing the international community - not merely the United States of America - is to restore peace, freedom and security to the people of Vietnam. If we fail here, the consequences may extend far beyond the area directly concerned. If we succeed, it could make possible new and greater progress toward a better world.

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