



# STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION  
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 53/29

## FAR EASTERN ISSUES

An address by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. L.B. Pearson, made to the Men's Canadian Club of Vancouver, May 27, 1953.

You would expect me, I think, to-day to discuss with you some aspects of foreign policy with which I am concerned for the time being in a direct and responsible way. I am going to do this in as frank and as informal a way as possible, and in the knowledge that I have not really had very much time to prepare what I am saying to you to-day.

It will not, I know, be news to you if I suggest that the primary necessity to-day is for the free nations to get closer together, to co-operate and to stand together. I think that is especially true at this particular moment when great efforts are being made to divide us by those who fear our unity even more, I think, than they fear our strength; and who are now trying to convince us that no threat to our security exists from Communist imperialism and, therefore, that we do not have to spend so much on defence, or indeed to accept the leadership of the United States in the name of collective security.

We know, and we should not forget, that the danger does remain and would very greatly and quickly increase, if friends and allies - especially the United States and the United Kingdom - began to divide and fall apart. Any words or gestures which lead that way are a victory for the forces of aggressive Communism and a defeat for peace.

I am not sure myself that the greatest danger to this kind of co-operation and unity which is so essential to-day is not to be found in a serious divergence of policies in Korea and the Far East.

Fundamental to this question and this danger, and deeper and more important even than the immediate Korean difficulties, is the policy that the free world should adopt to the Chinese Communist regime in Peking. There is, I think, no disagreement over what we should do, or at least what our obligations are, when, as in Korea, the Communist regime commits open aggression declared as such by the United Nations. We oppose it. We are under an obligation to oppose it even though we may sometimes differ as to methods and sometimes as to the limits of our opposition.

But that does not answer the main question: is it also a requirement of Western policy to do everything possible, short of war, even if it may risk war, to weaken and destroy and replace the Chinese Communist government as implacably hostile to us, and as irrevocably tied to Moscow in the international Communist conspiracy? That is one question. Or are we to consider the Peking government as another Communist government - like the governments of the U.S.S.R., or Czechoslovakia or Roumania - a government which the Chinese people themselves have accepted for good or ill, in which our concern is not with their internal system of government but only with the question of the extent to which these governments may pursue aggressive military policies?

The differing answers to these two questions, on both sides of the Atlantic, point up and underline the seriousness of the problem and the danger of division over it.

Only this morning a distinguished and powerful United States leader is reported as saying, (and I quote from the press, realizing, of course, that quotations of this kind are sometimes taken out of context and may sometimes give the wrong impression): "We should do our best, that is, the United States, to negotiate a Korean truce and if we fail, then let England and our other allies know that we are withdrawing from all further peace negotiations in Korea." He went on: "I believe we might as well abandon any idea of working with the United Nations in the East and reserve to ourselves a completely free hand."

All I can say is that if this should become the United States policy, it would be deplorable, I think, and a great blow to co-operation in the Pacific, and certainly a great blow to the United Nations, which, as I see it, still remains our best hope for the ultimate solution of these political problems which now so tragically divide the world. And, incidentally, in this interdependent age a free hand is pretty difficult for any state, however powerful, to secure. Yet, though we might have differing views on this kind of statement, it surely would be a very great mistake, and worse, a tragedy, if we got too wrought up over it or replied to it in irritable or controversial terms. Surely it is far more important to find out why this feeling prevails in certain quarters, in certain very responsible and some moderate quarters in the United States, and then try to get together and see what we can do to remove this difference of viewpoint and policy.

Some light on these difficulties may, I think, be thrown by our experiences in trying to negotiate an armistice in Korea. It is a very good case history in respect of this problem.

The truce negotiations in Korea, which have been going on for such a long time now, have been both difficult and delicate. They have been conducted with very great

patience and persistence by the United States officers who represent the United Nations Command, a Command which it should not be forgotten the United States Government was asked by the United Nations to set up. These negotiations have not, I think, been made easier nor has consultation between governments concerning them been made easier by premature and inaccurate reports which occasionally appear as to what has been going on and which tend to underline differences and divergencies of view.

Secret diplomacy, of course, of the old type is no doubt open to condemnation, and a great deal of harm was done in its name in days gone by. But I sometimes think that headline diplomacy, radio and television diplomacy, which seems to be succeeding it, is no improvement. It might be desirable if we could get back to secrecy in negotiation, with publicity in declarations of policy and certainly publicity in the results of negotiation. This kind of public negotiation, because at times it seems to be almost that, does affect for instance the very difficult problem of consultation between allies, and the Korean truce negotiations undoubtedly illustrate that difficulty.

Canada and the other countries participating in United Nations operations in Korea insist and, I think, rightly insist, and should continue to insist, that they should be consulted about important developments in Korea by the Government of the United States which, of course, controls the unified command. On purely military matters, such consultation is not often necessary nor, I think, required, except through the military liaison channels which have been set up. But the situation is different when the discussions are over political matters, or when there are military discussions with political implications like the present armistice talks.

We have no difficulty over this in principle. We are all agreed, and the United States has more than once expressed complete agreement with this principle. But it is not always easy to work it out to everyone's satisfaction in practice, especially when one member of the United Nations bears so much the greatest share of the burden of the United Nations in Korea. And we pay tribute to the effort of the United States in that regard. Sometimes decisions have to be made quickly, and sometimes it is not easy to reconcile that need for speedy decision with the legitimate demands of others to be consulted. And yet I think it is fair to say that, over the months that we have been discussing the Korean armistice, there has been a real effort made in Washington to bring about this reconciliation of difficulties. There is very good evidence of this in the discussions that have been going on in the last two or three weeks.

You may recall that last December at the United Nations we passed a resolution by an enormous majority, unanimous except for the Communist bloc, laying down certain principles which seemed to provide a satisfactory basis of settlement for the prisoner of war question which was the only obstacle, we were told, and remains the only

obstacle, in the way of an armistice. We in Canada - in the Canadian Government, and I think in Canada generally - accept the principles embodied in that resolution and we still stand by them. It is true that they were rejected by the Communists almost out of hand, but we feel that those principles are still binding on those of us who accepted them in good faith.

Then you will recall that just a few weeks ago, the Chinese and North Korean Communists, agreed to certain things which they had refused to accept previously. They agreed, you will recall, to exchange sick and wounded prisoners-of-war, something which they should have done years ago under the Geneva Convention about which they talk so much. They also agreed to resume negotiations on the whole question of an armistice, and on this resumption, they submitted new proposals which went much further than any previous Communist proposals to accept the principles laid down in the United Nations resolution. That, in our view, represented a considerable advance on their part to the United Nations' position.

Since that time, two or three weeks ago, we have had long and earnest consultations about these new proposals in Washington with the United States Government and other governments participating in Korea. We all felt, of course, that some clarification of certain points was necessary because, from fairly long and bitter experience, we know now what can be done by Communist proposals when any part of them seems to be left vague and open to different interpretations.

The Canadian Government also felt strongly, that in any reply to the Communists we should not depart in principle from the United Nations resolution. We all agreed in these talks, -- and the United States President announced his view in regard to these matters this morning. We also agreed entirely with the United States' position, which was also our position, that there should be no forcible repatriation in accordance with the principle which we were not willing to abandon and did not abandon at the United Nations last Assembly. We felt also that there should be no indefinite detention of prisoners. We agreed once the composition of the Repatriation Commission was decided, its administrative procedure would have to be pretty carefully worked out. And, finally, and these are the main points of agreement, we agreed that the disposition of those prisoners who would not return to their own homelands should be turned over to some form of political conference for consideration and for decision. Now these ideas on which we have agreed have been embodied in a new proposal submitted to the Communists, I think only last Monday, as a basis on which, if the Communists are acting in good faith, at all, should provide an honourable and acceptable armistice.

The Canadian Government, along with the United Kingdom and other governments participating in the Korean operations, stands firmly behind these proposals as fair, reasonable and in accord with the resolution of the United Nations Assembly supported by 54 of its members. The

Communists should not think, or try to make others think, that we are divided on this issue. We are not. I hope they will not subject themselves to the temptation to think that they can exploit our differences in this regard because on this matter we now stand united.

What follows if there is an armistice? Under the draft armistice agreement which we are discussing, there is to be a political conference to discuss Korean political matters and related matters. Now that of course becomes a United Nations responsibility and not the responsibility of any particular member of the United Nations, and is accepted by all of us as such. At the last meeting of the United Nations Assembly before we recessed, we passed a resolution which made it obligatory for the President of the Assembly to call the Assembly together as soon as an armistice agreement is signed, and that means presumably that the Assembly will then consider political questions arising out of that agreement.

If these political questions in regard to Korea can be satisfactorily solved -- and that is a big "if" -- then other Far Eastern questions can be considered. One of these of course -- there is no use trying to deceive ourselves -- is recognition of the Communist Government in Peking.

Our own position as a government on this matter is that it would be unwise to adopt any firm or final position now. I would not go beyond that except to say this: -- if, and I keep underlining these "if's" because "if's" loom large in international diplomacy these days -- if the Chinese Communists agree to an honourable armistice in Korea, which will end their aggression and bring about their withdrawal from Korea, and if they do not begin some other aggression in some other part of Asia, then we should agree, I think, that serious consideration can be given to the question of recognition in the light of all the facts at that time. I would not myself wish to go further than that but I think that we should in these circumstances go that far.

If we solve this problem and other specific problems, then there will remain, of course, the whole question, the ultimate question of Far Eastern and Pacific security. I think co-operation and collective security are just as necessary between the free states in the Pacific as in the Atlantic. Security, like peace, is indivisible. But that does not mean, of course, that security need be safe-guarded and strengthened by the same means in every part of the world. Conditions differ; so methods are bound to differ.

We have in the North Atlantic a closely knit group in which the same general conditions prevail. Inside that group we have built up habits of co-operations and free discussion. When we considered the North Atlantic pact, we knew whom we wanted in that pact, though we did not get everybody; and we knew the nature of our obligations and what we were defending ourselves against. At the present

time, I suggest, the position in the Pacific is not the same. The United States, for instance, which would have to take the lead in this matter in Atlantic and European matters, has made it quite clear to us, in private and in public, that she is not ready for any general Pacific security pact, and thinks that it would be unwise to force that issue at this time. There are other Pacific countries with special interests in the Pacific which would be worried about any effort at this time to bring about a general security pact there because some of them are not yet convinced that there is only one danger in the Pacific, and that it is Communism; and some of them are not convinced as to whom should be members of any such pact. That difficulty is specifically illustrated by the differences over the ANZUS pact. That pact for consultation and co-operation in the Pacific, includes only three countries, the United States, Australia and New Zealand; it does not include certain countries which actually have territorial possessions and obligations in the Pacific and in the Southeast Asian area. And if it is impossible, as it was impossible, to widen that particular grouping at that time to include these countries, I think it is reasonable to come to the conclusion that a general Pacific pact at this time, along the lines of the North Atlantic pact, would not be wise, nor would it be a constructive move in the direction of the security to which we are all trying to work in the Pacific.

I suggest that we should let this matter of security arrangements develop, and help it to develop, in the Pacific, meanwhile trying to keep each other informed, as we do, recognizing that the threat to our security is not a regional one but a global one and that strategy and planning may have to be global as well covering the Atlantic, the Mediterranean and the Pacific.

I would not like to finish my observations on this point without stressing once again that there can be no lack of concern, there should be no lack of concern in any part of Canada, East or West, over the problem of security in the Pacific, because whatever may be the situation in Western Europe, and there is some evidence that tension is easing a little there, there certainly has been no easing of tension in that part of the world where open military aggression has first displayed itself in the post-war period.

These are some random and rather disconnected observations on some of the problems that are facing all of us in Asia and the Pacific. It is good to know that in this country there is a basis of unity on our objectives in foreign affairs. We may differ as to methods. We do differ - we differ inside the House of Commons and we differ outside the House of Commons - but not in our objectives and our principles. There is only one objective in the minds of all Canadians and that is to do what we can, as a member of the free world coalition under the leadership of our great neighbour, the United States of America, and with the wisdom and support in that coalition of our mother country, the United Kingdom -- and with our other friends, to bring about a situation in the world and in Canada where we will not have to spend 45 percent of our budget every year on military defence.