

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES



CANADA

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 61/11

FREEDOM EAST AND WEST

Speech by Prime Minister, John G. Diefenbaker,
to the Canadian Weekly Newspapers Association,
Halifax, August 15, 1961

... An uncontrolled press, and a press that is free and untrammelled, represents the main streets of Canadian life, a press that is unsusceptible to sensationalism and faithful to the need of the community it serves. It is significant that you have chosen Halifax for your Annual Convention because it was here in 1835 that Joseph Howe launched a campaign against the unlimited authority of the executive council of his newspaper, the Nova Scotian. He could not get any lawyers to represent him, so he represented himself, and was successful. Here too was the home of the first newspaper published in the English language in Canada. ...

... This organization, representative of the power of the Canadian people in their communities, has a mission in the preservation of those things that contribute not only to the greatness of the nation today but the kind of Canada I see in the future. In other words, you build freedom by free and vigorous expression of public opinion. I am not going to define freedom to you in the ordinary terms that are used. Everyone has his or her definition.

Freedom to me is a simple thing to define. Freedom to me is not the right to do wrong. Freedom to me is the right to be wrong. That is the essence of the freedom for which we stand today. The right to choose one's own life path, freedom of assembly, the privilege of choosing those who will govern us, the kind of house in which we will live, the kind of church in which we will worship, the employer who hires us -- these are the principles upon which our democracy is built.

Communist Version of Freedom

All of these come to mind because in the last few days Mr. Khrushchov has issued a draft programme of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union for the years ahead. I think the press of Canada should give extensive coverage to that plan. What is

remarkable about it is not so much its promises but what it does not promise. It promises a Utopia but it denies free elections. It promises a degree of democracy but it does not promise to end the secret police. It promises education but there is no reference to freedom of the individual. It promises economic advantage but not freedom of choice. It promises some change in government - that is, from one generation to another or from one leader to another, but it has not yet determined a principle of political succession. In thousands of words there is contemptuous abuse of Western systems of government, of our economies and our efforts to build just and prosperous societies. It says we in the West are decadent; it says we are doomed to failure; it deals with some of the evils of free enterprise of 45, 50 and 100 years ago. It ignores the changes that have taken place in welfare, the cushions that are today applied against economic hardship. It denies the existence of freely-organized labour unions; it denies the freedom of choice that is today available in the Western nations; it says it is ultimately going to destroy us because of these things, many of which are merely historical and no longer exist. It fails to recognize that such structural faults as may be in democracy are diminished regularly by the flexibility of Western society. It promises free rent, free use of public transportation and free holiday camps but it does not give the individual freedom in the selection and use of these free services. It offers free travel without the freedom to travel. It offers plans for a house in which the landlord keeps the only key. Mr. Khrushchov says we are going to be undermined shortly.

I think we can say to Mr. Khrushchov that, as long as there is a free press and free people in the free world, the West is not going to lie down and roll over simply because he tells us in his party programme that we are done for. Mr. Khrushchov speaks of the contradictions in the capitalist society and talks of the Soviet paradise. At the same time we find the other exponent of Communism, China, exhorting the people to work harder, sacrifice more, and be prepared for struggles abroad. Somewhere between Peking and Moscow the wires of Communism are crossed.

I mention what Mr. Khrushchov said in that document on July 31 because in that document are the blueprints of the future. Hitler never wrote more clearly than does Mr. Khrushchov today as he places his plan before the people.

Spotlight on Berlin

The headlines of today are being drawn in Berlin. The Soviet Union has declared its intention to sign a separate peace treaty with the East German régime and turn over to them all control of access to the city of Berlin unless what is called a "peaceful solution" with the West is achieved by the end of the year. Mr. Khrushchov claims the right with the single stroke of his pen to terminate Western rights in the city which are based firmly on wartime and post-war agreements, unless we accept the kind of agreement that he desires. The Free world for the first time is

united. NATO preserves freedom because of the unity of the countries that are joined together in that alliance. Canada's contribution, through the former Prime Minister, my predecessor in office, was very great in the formation of NATO. If it had not been for NATO, the rights of free men long since would have gone. Mr. Khrushchov says that with the single stroke of his pen he will terminate Western rights in the city. The free world, I said, is united. Those rights and responsibilities are ours; we accept them. The people of West Berlin on many occasions have made clear their desire for a democratic way of life and for the continued presence of the Western occupying forces in their city.

Those responsibilities that rest on the shoulders of those that try to give to the free world leadership have been awe-inspiring in recent days. The leaders of the free world have agreed that the West does not intend to betray the trust placed in them by the citizens of West Berlin by turning them over to the tyranny of Communist rule.

Resilient Policy Needed

The West must pursue a policy which, while demonstrating the unity and determination of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to preserve the freedom of the citizens of West Berlin, is at the same time resilient and adaptable to changing conditions; we must be ready to make changes where those changes do not mean the sacrifice of principle. I believe this with all my heart. If in 1913 and 1914 Kaiser Wilhelm had known what the attitude of the countries opposed to him was, there might never have been war; for Lord Grey has said that, if we had not given up negotiation, we would have prevented the war that took place. And again in 1935 and 1939, if the Western nations opposed to Nazi Germany had made it clear where they stood, it is generally agreed today that things might have been different and that war might have been prevented. I believe that if the Western alliance maintains its unity, does not indulge in challenging speeches and shows itself to be possessed of calm determination of purpose, there should be no fear in the days ahead.

Modern Tale of Two Cities

In the last few days something else has happened. The closing of the border on Sunday between East and West Berlin is a serious incident. Berlin is a modern tale of two cities. The lights of one are too bright for the other. The mightiest empire on earth in area and in potential power has closed the gates to Berlin, not in defence of men, not against the people outside, but in defiance of those within. I think that the very fact that in the last few weeks a horde of people have fled from East Germany to West Germany, and that that horde has in past years been mounting, indicates that all is not as it is claimed to be. If the Soviet system is paradise, why is it the people of West Berlin do not beset the Brandenburg Gate and beseech the Burgomaster of East Berlin for citizenship?

What is clear is that this Communist action has added a new and disturbing element to a situation which already holds dangerous potentialities. It is a matter of serious concern when, by unilateral, illegal, and provocative action, tension is augmented so greatly. The men in the Kremlin should now realize that the crisis they have manufactured has had the effect, not of causing hesitation and disunity among the nations in the Western alliance, but of crystallizing Western strength and Western purpose. I express the hope, and I do so in all seriousness, that Mr. Khrushchov and the Kremlin will not mistake the determination of the West for desperation and will not mistake our defensive preparations for aggressive intent. We do not know desperation nor are our intentions aggressive, but like any prudent householder we are adjusting our insurance to the risks that we must face. I hope that we will be able to engage in positive and constructive negotiations. I hope that the countries of the free world and their peoples will not be overcome by uncertainty, by alarm - yes, by panic. By united resolutions we have to make clear to Mr. Khrushchov the free choice of all members of the NATO alliance. We will not permit him to succeed by any effort to undermine the basic unity of purpose of the free world, or divert us from our determination to preserve the freedom of West Berlin and Western rights of access to that city.

We ask ourselves this question. Why has Mr. Khrushchov's puppet government in East Germany decided to precipitate a crisis at this time by closing the border in derogation of the four-power agreement? This action, I said a moment ago seems to be one of provocation coupled with the desperation born of the failure of East Germany to stem the exodus of East Germans. What are we going to do? What attitude will Canada take? Whatever that stand may be, I want it to be representative of the unity of this nation for the welfare of freedom.

... I can't say to you at this moment what we are going to do, but I can say that everywhere in the Western free world and among the NATO nations unity of action is under continuing and constant review. The leaders in the free world are everywhere in consultation.

In NATO, Canada has a proud record. It has met its military goals in NATO. I believe that all nations belonging to that organization should bring their forces up to strength, not by way of threat but as an indication of the fact that the NATO nations are serious in the stands that they have taken and are united in their stand. NATO, I said a little earlier, has preserved the freedom of the West, and NATO forces must have the best and most effective defence and defence weapons that are available to them. There are some in Canada who advocate we should withdraw from NATO in the event that nuclear weapons are made available for the possession and control of NATO. I believe that to follow that course would be dangerous to the survival of the forces of NATO that are there now, should war begin. And it would be dangerous for the survival of freedom itself.

I know there are those who advocate this. ... Would you in 1961, faced by the overwhelming power of Soviet might in East Germany close to West Berlin with large divisions fully armed, would you place in the hands of those who guard the portals of freedom nothing but bows and arrows? They would stand against overwhelming power - it is as simple as that.

I appreciate very much the opportunity of being here. I thought I ought to place before you not just a speech of words but something in regard to that problem that is close to the hearts of Canadians who in two World Wars sacrificed greatly for freedom's survival. Well, I have endeavoured to place before you something of the picture as I see it. I am not giving you a picture of fear. I am trying to place before you something of those problems which you must share with us and all who have responsibility. It is only through a press, fearless to advocate, fearless to criticize when criticism is unpopular, willing to stand against the things that are popular when they are not beneficial, that freedom reigns. It is only in that way that freedom can survive.

S/C