



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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HOW IS NATO DOING

An address by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. L.B. Pearson, delivered at the Directors' Luncheon on International and Health Day, Canadian National Exhibition, Toronto, September 2, 1952

...There is, of course, a very real connection between health - personal, national and international - and the relations between states. Was not the loss of one of Napoleon's most important battles due to the fact that the Emperor had eaten something at breakfast that disagreed with him; so that he was not at his physical best that fateful day? There are numberless other occasions where the bad health of an individual - from Caesar's fits to Pitt's gout - has played its part in the determination of the destiny of millions.

In the national sphere no people can progress politically, economically or in any other way, if, collectively, they are an unhealthy group. Every civilized government - and some whose claim to civilization we have the right to question - recognizes this. The relationship between health and poverty has been established beyond doubt as has the relationship between poverty and social unrest, political disturbance and the acceptance of the sordid and debasing doctrines of Communism.

It has also been recognized that in the field of health, as in so many other fields, national action is not enough. So we have increasing co-operation between states in this field - notably through the World Health Organization where so much beneficial and humanitarian work is being done without benefit of headlines; without benefit also of the co-operation of a single Cominform state.

All this health progress - on all levels - is fine and encouraging provided that we so order our international affairs that nations do not become vigorous and healthy merely to fight each other.

As the representative of Israel put it recently at the Fifth World Health Assembly:

"Should we promote health only to provide more people for slaughter in battles and wars? Should we fight against infant mortality only to spare the children to be murdered later on by bombs and starvation? Medical men can only be promoters of peace. Our work would be quite meaningless if it were not based on the conviction that the destination of man is life and creation, not death and destruction."

It is not only medical men who must believe in and act on this philosophy. It is today burned into the souls of all of us. Our deepest hopes and our most terrible anxieties centre around the question of peace or war in the atomic age. There are other problems of course, many of which may seem closer to home like taxes and the cost of steaks or the stupidity of those who govern us. But that of peace between peoples transcends everything, now that "science has been harnessed to the chariot of destruction", and we realize that war might be the end of all.

A poll was taken in Canada the other day by the Canadian Institute of Public Opinion. I confess that my feeling about polls is that which I have about pills, they can be very useful if taken in moderation and with care. But I certainly agree with the result of this poll which showed that 22 per cent of those who were asked "What is the greatest single problem facing the government?" replied "War and defence", while the next group, only 8 per cent were worried more about the high cost of living.

How, then, are we doing in the effort to prevent war? Has there been any fundamental change in the nature and urgency of the menace that faces us?

The answer to the last question is "no". The danger to peace and the threat to freedom remain as immediate and as menacing as ever. There may be an easing of the situation here or a deterioration there; in Western Europe some of the feeling of imminent crisis and danger has disappeared; in Asia it has increased. But the menace of Soviet imperialism exploiting the doctrine of revolutionary Communism with its conscious agents in the members of every Communist party in the world, including the one in Canada, that menace remains. We should never forget for one moment that we are facing the cruellest, most powerful, best organized conspiracy in all history. But this doesn't mean that the conspiracy will inevitably erupt in World War Three. It may or it may not. The decision is not primarily and directly in the hands of the free world. It is in the minds of the conspirators of Moscow. Our duty - we who are free - is to do what we can to convince them that if they make the wrong decision they will meet a powerful and united resistance by the free world, and one which gives them no chance of success. By so doing, we can influence powerfully the decision against aggressive military action.

This organization of resistance to aggression should be, and one day, we must hope, will be through the United Nations. At the moment, this is not possible and so today our most effective agency for building up our collective strength to preserve the peace is NATO.

It was, I think, in this room on September 2, 1947, many months before the North Atlantic Pact was actually signed, that I ventured to say:

"If forced, we might make special security arrangements within the United Nations, inviting all those member states to participate in them who are willing to build up an agency within the Organization which would have the power which the whole Organization does not possess under the charter If it is desired to work out a special arrangement for collective security to include those democratic and freedom-loving states who are willing to give up certain sovereign rights in the interests of peace and safety, why shouldn't it be done? Especially as any arrangement of this kind would have to be consistent with the Charter of the United Nations. . . ."

Well, it has been done through the signature of the North Atlantic Treaty and the establishment of a strong organization of co-operating states under that Treaty.

Recently, I think the feeling has developed that the high hopes that have been placed on NATO for our collective defence and the building of an enduring structure for co-operation between the member governments, are not being realized.

On the one hand, there are those who think that we have - by our decisions at Lisbon - imposed impossible military targets on the various governments and that the effort to achieve them is resulting in economic weakness and social and political division - the very result that the forces of Communist imperialism hope for. It is charged by some that in NATO we are subordinating economic and political co-operation to exaggerated and excessive military plans and preparations. Others are genuinely worried because NATO, which now has a permanent home, a permanent organization and a permanent Council in Paris, is not developing as it should in the non-military field; that the big powers are making their own decisions and ignoring NATO in the process.

On the other hand, there are those who, remembering the capacity of Soviet Russia to set in motion at any moment a military machine that could overrun and crush the forces of Western Europe, are anxious and impatient because our defence plans are inadequate and we are taking too long in putting even these inadequate plans into operation.

It is, of course, easy and wishful to comfort ourselves by merely repeating that everything is fine with NATO, in its defence of the peace and its promise for the future. This, however, is not good enough. Continuous and vigilant examination of the operations of representative and executive international bodies is as important as it is in the case of national governmental agencies. NATO, subjected to such an examination - and this is being done continuously by the member governments - gives no reason for complacency or complete satisfaction. On the other hand, it gives no ground for despair or exaggerated pessimism, for revising our view that the establishment and the progress of this coalition is a major achievement in the history of our times and that its growing strength and, equally important, its unity of purpose and action is the strongest deterrent against aggression at the present time. When we hear criticisms that NATO is concentrating too much on military defence and not enough on building the Atlantic community, we should remember that to Moscow and its satellites and slaves, NATO stands as the greatest obstacle - by its unity as much as its strength - to the achievement of their aggressive ambitions. Against it they have levelled their biggest guns of abuse and attack.

Of course, NATO is still far from perfect as an agency for international co-operation between its members. In the short period of its existence, it has not managed to make as much progress as we would like in the field of economic and social and political integration. But this - in contrast to the defence job - is a long-range programme and no one who has examined the matter seriously has ever had any illusions about the time and effort that would be required to realize our oft-repeated statement that NATO must be more than a military alliance. The impatience of well-meaning people because the course of national historical development has not been reversed over-night at times makes me impatient. Nor do I believe that the Kremlin and all it stands for has yet made it possible or wise for NATO to convert some of its shields into ploughshares.

Admittedly, political and social co-operation among NATO's members must be pursued and progress must be made here if the coalition is to be strong and enduring. This applies also to trade and economic relationships. Defence co-operation and economic conflict are difficult to reconcile. It should, in fact, be a first objective of the NATO members to reduce and remove the obstacles to the freest possible trade between themselves and, equally important, between themselves and the rest of the free world. A restrictive and controlled trading area within NATO would put a great strain on the cohesion and unity of the group for other purposes. Equally unfortunate would be the adoption of such ring-fence policies as the basis of the relationship between NATO countries and other free democracies. When we talk about developing and strengthening NATO economic co-operation we do not, I hope, mean that kind of co-operation.

The most urgent and immediate problem, however, remains defence against aggression. This should - I am myself convinced still be given first priority over other NATO plans; all the more because it embodies a short-term objective. We have the right to hope that when this objective is reached - but only then - we can devote more of our NATO time, energy and resources to constructive non-military policies which can be pursued while we maintain the level of defensive strength necessary until international political developments make its reduction possible. And "maintaining" should not require as great an effort as "building".

What progress, then, are we making in the building up of defence and deterrent forces - adequate for this purpose - and no more than adequate?

Well, NATO's strength has been steadily increasing. Canada by sending a Brigade Group and fighter squadrons overseas has contributed to that increase and thereby to the strengthening of our hope for peace. Not only have NATO forces under arms been increased, essential airfields are being constructed and put into use; training programmes have been got under way. Communications services and other facilities are being developed and modern equipment is now coming from the assembly lines. Finally, a supreme command for all NATO forces in Europe has been organized. If the worst should happen, and war be forced on us - because that is the only way it could come about - NATO forces in Europe could now give a much better account of themselves than they could a year ago. But they are not yet strong enough to give assurance that the initial assault could be successfully resisted. NATO members - especially the European members - have the right to that assurance, all the more because in the military and strategic and technical circumstances of today the land defence against and the air counter-attack to the initial assault may be decisive. Forces in being and the power immediately in reserve may decide the issue.

The minimum defence required to meet such an initial shock was agreed on at Lisbon, though there can never be fixed and final decisions in these matters. The Lisbon programme was not one that could, I think, fairly be attacked as militaristic, or unrealistic, having regard to the danger which made defence necessary. Furthermore, it was a firm programme for 1952 only, the figures for 1953 and 1954 were for planning purposes only, subject to revision later in the light of political and economic considerations.

Fulfillment of this 1952 Lisbon programme has not been easy. Some unforeseen shortages in equipment have developed. Some members have encountered more serious economic and financial difficulties than expected. But every member is making an honest effort to meet its objective by the end of the year and I think that substantial success will have been achieved by that time. An English weekly of very high repute, the "Economist", which has never uncritically accepted the Lisbon decisions, had this to say the other day about the progress in implementing those decisions:

"The suggestion which is now being heard that the Lisbon plans are millstones around the necks of the Atlantic allies is inaccurate and unfair; there is full provision in them for revision and second thoughts, and no justification for unilateral action by member governments.

"Even more important is the fact that the short-term plans which were agreed at Lisbon have turned out to be remarkably accurate. By the end of this year General Ridgway will have a number of divisions not far short of the fifty he was promised; if there is a deficiency of a few divisions it will be in reserves rather than in front-line formations. How well trained the latter are will be shown in the manoeuvres about to begin in Germany. In aircraft the total number of machines available will be only a few hundreds short of the 4,000 planned. The work on bases, communication lines and headquarter systems has made remarkable progress. There are not enough men and weapons on the spot to make Western Europe impregnable - but no one ever thought there would or will be. The military purpose is to confront any Russian threat in Central Europe with powerful delaying action; the political purpose is to remove from the minds of western statesmen the fear that they can nowhere in the world act firmly and boldly for fear of exposing Western Europe to a threat that could not be resisted. Both those purposes must remain unchanged so long as the present diplomatic deadlock continues, and nothing has occurred this year in Europe to suggest that anything more than a slight easing of tension is likely."

This is, I think, a good short statement of NATO's plans, purposes and achievements, though it may be somewhat optimistic on the realization of the 1952 force totals.

As to the future, we must as a first necessity bring to 100% completion the Lisbon 1952 programme as quickly as possible. That is a minimum requirement. Beyond that, the NATO agencies are already examining the position with a view to making proposals - and there could be no more difficult task than this - which will reconcile risks, requirements and resources. When this review is completed - late this year - decisions - vitally important decisions - will again have to be taken by governments through their ministerial representatives on the NATO Council.

Those decisions will have to balance military, economic and political factors. This is about the most difficult balancing act in history and I have no illusions that the result will satisfy everyone. There will be those who will say that we are taking criminal risks in accepting inadequate force targets and in our slow timing. There are others who will argue that we are playing the Communist game by accepting military demands to impose on some at least of the member

states crushing burdens which will create economic distress and social division and which are not justified by the threat to peace which faces us.

I suppose the best solution will be found - as is so often the case - somewhere between these extreme views.

Certainly this is no time to panic into extreme and unbalanced military preparedness. But it is also no time to relax the necessary effort we have begun or to deceive ourselves that the crisis has passed. Such self-deception is all the easier as the bills for protection come in and are reflected in our taxes.

NATO by its resolve, its unity and its growing power is now the strongest shield we have against aggressive attack, and before too long, it will provide the protection which may make possible the negotiation with some chance of success of the differences that now so dangerously divide the world.

This, then, is no time to falter or to hesitate, but one for determined and intelligent effort to finish the immediate job ahead of us. Then - but only then - can we look forward to a peace which means more than the absence of declared war - and progress which means more than better bombs and bigger guns.

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