

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 56/25

THE SITUATION IN HUNGARY

Statement made by Mr. L.B. Pearson, Secretary of State for External Affairs, during the Second Emergency Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York on November 4, 1956.

Mr. President, notwithstanding the words of the Soviet delegate, in the past twenty-four hours we have witnessed in Hungary one of the greatest and grimmest betrayals in history. This is a sad and desolate moment for all who have been striving for the extension of freedom and justice throughout the world.

It is, first of all, and above all, the people of Hungary who have been betrayed--the students, the peasants, the workers, whom the Soviet Union so frequently professes to champion. For ten years all the resources of a great empire were used to weaken and destroy all feeling for national and personal freedom in Hungary and the other countries of Eastern Europe on whom communist regimes had been imposed after World War II by foreign forces. But events in Hungary--and elsewhere-- have dramatically revealed the results of these ten years of suppression and indoctrination to be failure--often concealed behind a smiling facade of propaganda, but failure. In Hungary the mask of a "people's democracy" was stripped away; the myth of the monolithic unity of the communist empire was destroyed. With incredible courage the Hungarian people proved once again that man, once free, will never finally accept oppression and slavery, even though he may be forced to submit to it for long periods. Armed at first only with burning patriotism and a dauntless spirit the plain people of Hungary rose against the oppressor. And the world watched their struggle hopefully, as the new head of the government, Mr. Nagy, promised free elections, the abolition of the secret police, and negotiations for the

withdrawal of foreign troops from Hungary. It seemed only a few days ago that the resolution and the sacrifices of these men and women would yield them freedom at last and bring them a government of their own choice. It was the dawn of a new day--the people had risen and their will would prevail, or so it appeared.

Then came the great betrayal. At the very time that, we have been told, negotiations were beginning between Soviet and Hungarian military leaders on a withdrawal of Soviet forces from Hungary, the Soviet Union was moving large new forces into position in Hungary where they could stamp out the rising flame of freedom and re-impose a ruthless and savage oppression. As the Soviet representative put it, the Nagy Government "fell apart". The Soviet Union's shameless disregard of its obligations under the Charter by its armed intervention has done more than kill Hungarians. It has betrayed the principles and ideals of our United Nations.

We have heard a great deal from the representative of the Soviet Union in the past few days about the iniquities of aggression, the unpardonable sin of force exerted by large countries upon small countries in order to bend them to the "imperialist" will, as he put it. There is no need for me to dwell now on the hypocrisy of the Soviet concern for one small nation when its own tanks and bombers are compelling an even smaller nation, which had briefly but gloriously raised its head, to put on the chains again. The Soviet delegate has made the parallel between the situation in Egypt and the situation in Hungary. I would reply first, that the United Nations should judge each situation on its merits; but also, that there is no parallel between the intentions of free democratic nations with a long history of respect for the rights of other nations and those of a dictatorial regime which has not shown the slightest understanding of international collaboration or consideration for the rights of others. That difference is, I think, very clearly revealed in the present situation. The governments of the United Nations and of France have stated firmly and publicly that they are prepared to hand over what they claim to be solely their police role to a United Nations force; a force which we are now trying to organize. It is quite true that there remain differences between the British and the French on the one hand, and a majority of this Assembly on the other, on the conditions in which this transfer can take place. Nevertheless, a transfer has been accepted as necessary and desirable and a promise has been given that it will take place.

Will the Soviet Union give us the same promise with respect to the military operations against Hungary. I put this question directly to the Soviet representative. He has told us that his government has intervened in Hungary for a purpose, and that this purpose is ostensibly to protect the interests of the Hungarian people themselves. He wants to protect the Hungarian people, so he says, from a reactionary fascist clique. No one in this Assembly has any desire whatsoever to see the long-suffering Hungarian people delivered from the tyranny of one clique into that of another. All we ask in this resolution which is before us is to let them form the kind of free national government they want. How can this best be done? Surely by an impartial and disinterested international authority which can hold the ring and enable all the Hungarian people, without fear or reprisal, to establish a free and democratic government of their own choice. We have before us a proposal that the Secretary General investigate the situation. Where else can such an authority come from than the United Nations. Will the Soviet Government recognize that? If not, why not?

Yesterday my government proposed the intervention of a United Nations force for peaceful purposes in the Middle East, and that proposal secured the overwhelming support of this Assembly; no single vote was cast against it. Why should we not now establish a United Nations mission or United Nations supervisory machinery of an appropriate kind for the situation in Hungary? I ask the Soviet Union to accept this chance, perhaps this last chance, to prove its good faith to the world. It is not only the Hungarian people who will be the victims of a refusal. It is a Soviet claim--very often repeated--to be the only true champion of peaceful co-existence; the only real foe of imperialism; the opponent of colonialism. If they refuse this United Nations investigation and examination into conditions in Hungary, never again will they be able to talk about colonial oppression or imperialism except in terms of the most blatant hypocrisy, recognized by everyone as such.

This is also the last chance of the USSR to show that their collective security system in Eastern Europe is something more than a collection of master and satellites. In this respect, what a contrast it is to an association of free states banded together on a basis of free co-operation, any one of which may withdraw if it wishes. Their system, if they persist in this aggressive intervention, stands exposed for all the world to see, resting on nothing but brute force and despotic control.

Mr. President, we owe it to the people of Hungary, we owe it to the United Nations, we owe it to freedom to condemn in the strongest terms what we know has happened and to investigate through the United Nations what is happening now.

Surely Mr. President, no single member of this Assembly will refuse to join in that condemnation, and in the request for this investigation.

Perhaps at this moment we cannot do more than this, but we surely cannot do less.

S/C