

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES



INFORMATION DIVISION
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No. 50/41 Statement by Mr. L.B. Pearson, Secretary of State for External Affairs, made in the New York Herald Tribune Forum, on October 24, 1950.

In this confused and troubled world it is a consolation to know that out of evil good can sometimes come and that out of danger security sometimes grows. We have had a good example of this within the last few days. With the passage by the General Assembly of the United Nations by an overwhelming majority of the resolution on "United Action for Peace" we can begin to see how the attack on the Republic of Korea last June, wanton and wicked though it was, has resulted in an important step forward towards the goal of organized international forces ready to check aggression.

When the Republic of Korea was attacked by aggressors in June, there were no international forces in being which could be used against the invaders. The provisions which had been written into the Charter designed to equip the United Nations with such forces had remained inoperative because it was impossible to agree with the Soviet Union on how such forces should be raised. Nevertheless, all those countries which value their own freedom and which realize that in the last analysis it cannot be maintained unless the freedom of other countries is also preserved were at once acutely aware that this attack could not be allowed to succeed. They also realized that a broad international effort should be made to defeat it. In that situation the Government of the United States acted with great vigour and courage. On behalf of the United Nations, and in response to a resolution of the Security Council, American troops were at once committed to battle in a desperate attempt to stem the invasion. No praise would be too great for the heroism they displayed and for the prodigies they performed. All of us throughout the free world are greatly in their debt.

Gradually other countries were able to make contributions to augment the strength of United Nations forces in Korea. Naval and air contingents were despatched by seven countries, including my own, Canada, and, as the need for additional ground forces became apparent, steps were taken in a number of countries to raise them for service in Korea. This was a slow process, however; and to the present day, of course, your forces, along with those of the Republic of Korea, and the United Kingdom have had to bear the brunt of the fighting.

The delay in the despatch of ground forces of other countries to take their place in the line in Korea must often have been hard to understand. However, it was an inevitable result of the failure of the United

Nations to make prior arrangements for the organization of international forces which could be used in such a situation. Smaller countries like my own do not ordinarily have armed forces available for quick despatch to any part of the world; and we had not been given any indication that the Security Council would be able to agree on measures by which such forces would be required. Our experience had led us to believe that action of this kind would not be possible because of the operation of the veto.

The Korean war has underlined the necessity for arrangements within the United Nations, which would enable a genuinely international force to be quickly assembled. The resolution which was recently passed by the General Assembly attempts to provide such permanent arrangements; and it seems to me to be well designed to that end. We in Canada have taken special interest in this proposal for the creation on a permanent basis of international forces earmarked to carry out obligations we have all undertaken under the United Nations Charter. When we announced in Canada the raising of our special force for service in Korea, we made it clear that this force would be available for whatever action might be necessary in any quarter of the globe in order to carry out our military obligations either under the United Nations Charter or under the North Atlantic Treaty. We were the first country, I believe, to earmark a portion of our forces in this way. And I think I am right in saying that that declaration by the Canadian Government was the germ from which the central section of the present Assembly resolution was developed; that section in which it is recommended that each member of the United Nations should, and I quote, "maintain within its national armed forces elements so trained and organized that they could promptly be made available for service as a United Nations unit or units upon recommendation by the General Assembly or the Security Council". If member states carry out this recommendation, the United Nations will never again be in the position in which it found itself last June.

I have been speaking so far of proposals which would result in an international force composed of separate national contingents. It may be that in present circumstances we can hardly expect to go much further than this. On the other hand, I can see advantages in the creation of one or two genuinely United Nations police divisions in which volunteers would enlist as individuals, and in which the training would be conducted by the United Nations itself from the outset. The problems of organizing, supplying and commanding such a polyglot force and of maintaining discipline in it would be formidable. But they need not prove insuperable. Certainly the advantages of such a force, even if it were a small one, would be great. The United Nations would then be equipped with a military force which was in the fullest sense its own and which could be used to assist in national defence against small aggressions and help prevent them developing into big ones. Divisions of this international character would also have the advantage of giving an opportunity of serving the United Nations to nationals from countries too small to contribute national contingents of their own. The formation of such divisions clearly demands further study. This also has been provided

for in the General Assembly resolution on "United Action for Peace". A Collective Measure Committee has been established in order to examine this and other related questions.

These developments, I think, mark an important step forward in the direction of providing the United Nations with effective military forces. To an extent which I think would have surprised anyone canvassing the possibilities before the attack on Korea, progress has been made in giving reality to the ideal of an international force, ready and competent to resist aggression. For centuries this ideal has attracted thinkers distressed by the conflicts between lawless and warring nations and anxious to find a means of bringing these antagonisms under the rule of law. The formation of international police forces has always seemed the only practical and logical issue from these age-old and seemingly interminable conflicts. The alluring analogy of the composition of personal and tribal feuds by the creation of police power on a national scale has suggested to many minds the way in which national conflicts must be composed. And in consequence, a great number of paper plans have been proposed, none of which has ever been implemented.

We must hope that the present effort, to make the United Nations into a more effective instrument for maintaining peace, does not suffer the fate of these earlier attempts. There is reason for such hope. This resolution is rooted in present day political realities. It springs from a vivid and recent experience in which many nations realized the crying need for effective collective action. Furthermore, the innovations which it proposes, do not demand from nation states a greater sacrifice of sovereignty than, in present circumstances, they may be expected to accept. For that very reason, however, it would be a mistake to over-rate the advance marked by this action of the United Nations. It is unlikely that all of the members of the organization will be willing to maintain elements within their national armed forces available for use in the United Nations. Even those nations which do will still retain ultimate control over whatever forces they may from time to time place under the United Nations. The effect of this resolution, therefore, even if it proves as successful as I believe it will in beginning the creation of international police forces, will still fall short of what would be required before we could be sure that national antagonisms can be disciplined and national forces brought under international control.

We live today, like men in all ages, in a world of power. Nor do I think we should be squeamish or resentful about that fact. In a famous phrase Lord Acton once complained "All power corrupts". That is only partly true. Power is corrupting only if it is divorced from responsibility, from justice and from mercy. It must be tamed and harnessed. In particular, it must be harnessed to serve the purpose of that sphere of social responsibility which is increasingly being crystallized and codified as law. That in the international sphere will be our supreme and sovereign task for many years to come. We still have a long distance to go.

But I think we can take some satisfaction from the fact that the work of the present session of the General Assembly of the United Nations has brought us nearer to that goal.

Some thoughtful men have viewed this development with misgivings. They include Prime Minister Nehru of India who recently expressed his fear that by our resolution we were converting the United Nations "into a war organization more than one devoted to international peace". This, in my opinion, is a mistaken view. We are not doing that. We are merely asking all loyal members of the United Nations to organize in order to carry out their obligations under the Charter; to accept the truth that peace is indivisible; and to agree to put force, under international not national control, behind the law and against the aggressor, so determined by the world community. That does not make the United Nations an organization for war, but one strong enough to stop war. That is a good objective and one which we must work together to achieve.

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