



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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No. 65/3 Extracts from an Address by
the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson,
Prime Minister of Canada,
to the Canadian Club of Ottawa,
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How do we face the world in 1965 - and what face does the world show us at the present time?

In the first place, we shall not make much of a face at all - before others - if we do not maintain a good face at home, with strength and unity, a sense of purpose and progress. A weak and divided Canada, anxious about its present, and lacking faith in its future, can play no worthy part in international affairs. This is only one additional reason for confounding our domestic defeatists and for reminding ourselves that Canada's destiny is as bright as that of any country in the world. Foreigners know it. So should we, and declare our belief in words and action.

We must face the world, then, with confidence in ourselves. Only then can we continue to make an effective contribution to that search for peace and security which remains the first objective of our foreign policy.

What form should that contribution take? What is the best way, for us, at this time, to operate internationally, as a middle power whose policies cannot compel anyone but may influence many, as a middle power with a proud international record, a country which also has special advantages in diplomacy and international relations - advantages which flow out of our continental and Commonwealth positions, out of the reputation we have gained as a people who honourably discharge their international duties in war and in peace? Our opportunities, and our obligations too, are the greater because we have the economic power, the material resources, and the technical skills to make our position one of respectable importance, while we are not big enough to alarm anybody or dominate anybody's way of life. We have American plumbing without American power. This makes us attractive to many - especially new and under-developed states.

If we examine - as we should - how best we may today participate in international affairs (and I can only touch on one or two aspects of such participation), we should not be unduly influenced by the post-war experience we have had, most of which is highly creditable to ourselves but which was determined by conditions which have changed and are changing, and in which we worked through international organizations which now have to be adapted to these world changes.

I think of the Commonwealth, of NATO, of the United Nations, and, of course, of this continent where Canada-U.S. relations, so vitally important to us, have of themselves built up a series of organizational arrangements, ranging from formal ministerial or official committees to direct personal contacts, by meeting and more frequently by telephone. I may add that the lines are open, the talk is friendly and the problems are many and difficult.

One factor in our foreign relations is unchanging, however, in a changing world - the importance to us of international trade and investment.

By any standards, Canada is one of the world's greatest trading nations. Our interest in expanding world trade - and we are showing it in a very practical way at Geneva at this moment - is based not only on material self-interest (no country depends more on trade than we do for prosperity); it is also a measure of our belief in the neighbourhood of all men and all nations.

We should be very foolish indeed if we managed our own financial and economic affairs in a way to prejudice our good relations with our trading friends.

The first of the international groupings through which our foreign policies operate is the Commonwealth of Nations. This now bears about as much relation to the British Commonwealth that existed when I first entered External Affairs in 1928 as the life I led then does to the life I lead now!

The little group of white graduates from colonial status sitting around the fireplace at 10 Downing Street at periodic clubby meetings and listening to the old headmaster discuss the imperial burden and how the youngsters should now appreciate the privilege of sharing it - this has been replaced by 21 prime ministers seated formally around a conference table, all but four (at the most recent meeting) from Asia, Africa, the Mediterranean or the Caribbean. As an old-school-tie bond, terms at Oxford or Cambridge now have to yield precedence to a term in one of Her Majesty's penal institutions, for disaffection.

At its last meeting of prime ministers, this new Commonwealth decided to establish a central Secretariat. Such proposals have been made before. They had always been rejected by Canada - particularly by Mr. Mackenzie King - as establishing machinery for imperial centralization which would

affect our cherished status. This reason may have been valid 25 years ago. Its unreality now is shown by the fact that the new African Commonwealth nations were the initiators of the Secretariat idea and that no one expects - least of all Downing Street - that a U.K. national will be the first Secretary-General. He is more likely to be a Canadian.

This gives the clue to the new value of an old international institution. The Commonwealth must become a link of goodwill and mutual assistance between nations of every race, colour and continent and in every stage of development; it must utilize the feeling of family, which persists, to build up a meaningful, non-discriminatory co-operation, based not so much on preferential trade as preferential feeling. If it can do this, the Commonwealth can enter a period of new and wider usefulness. It is our policy to do everything we can to achieve that result.

Then there is NATO, another international club of which we are a charter and dues-paying member. I believe in the Atlantic coalition as much as I ever did, but less as a defence coalition and more as a foundation for a closely co-operating political and economic community. Unfortunately, there is little political and economic cement these days for Atlantic unity - while the bond of collective defence for collective security, though still the main force that holds the Alliance together, is becoming weaker as the conditions which brought about NATO in the first place change. Those conditions were primarily the menace of Soviet military aggression and the temptation of European weakness and division.

Now Europe is strong and flourishing. This, plus Eastern Europe's gradual emergence from satellite dependency, and other things, has lessened the immediate fear of armed aggression by the Soviet Union.

We must now re-examine the principles on which the Atlantic Alliance was founded 16 years ago. The best result would be to come closer together, organically, on the old treaty basis. But that is impossible at the moment if we wish to include the France of General de Gaulle. And, certainly in Canada, it is impossible to contemplate an Atlantic coalition without France.

Alternatively, we may have to consider new arrangements by which Europe takes responsibility for the security of one side of the Atlantic, North America for the other, with interlocking co-operative arrangements for mutual assistance against attack.

I do not suggest that such a development in the Atlantic Alliance is going to take place this year or next. Nor do I suggest that anything we do should run counter to the building up of the Atlantic Community in every way open to us.

I merely state that the defence arrangements suitable for 1948 may not be appropriate for 1965, or possible, for long, after 1965.

This means that a country like Canada will have to consider very seriously whether the contribution we are at present making overseas to NATO is the best use of our resources for the defence of peace. It is not a matter of defaulting on our obligation to contribute to collective defence. It is merely a matter of how best we can continue to do it as conditions change. It is always easy - and therefore tempting - to follow the beaten path, even when it is not leading us anywhere in particular. But, I should add, before we abandon that path, we had better be reasonably certain that the new route is a better way of reaching the goal.

Next, there is the United Nations, full support of which, as I have been saying for 20 years, is a basic foundation of our foreign policy.

I still believe this, but I think the time has come - especially in the light of the current crisis in the Assembly - to have a long, hard look at the organization.

It has changed in 20 years as much as has the Commonwealth. It is no longer dominated by Western Europe and the Western Hemisphere, with a few Communist states raising the devil at every opportunity. The Communists are less obstreperous and the domination through numbers is becoming more and more African and Asian.

We have to re-examine the Charter in the light of this change and of the new world of emerging peoples who do not necessarily believe in either Communist ideology or in Parliamentary democracy.

For instance, when the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. confront each other in New York, on the problem of no-payment-no-vote, the majority of UN members are now not impressed by either side.

Furthermore, if we solve this particular financial problem without facing up to bigger issues, the solution would not amount to much more than papering over cracks.

What we shall soon have to decide is whether the UN is to become merely a social, humanitarian, and assistance organization, with political and security problems only for debate, not resolution. Or whether, by revising the Charter or by agreement between the more important members, the peace-keeping functions of the United Nations can be made reasonably effective. The time of decision is approaching.

It is becoming increasingly difficult for a limited group of middle powers, of which Canada has been in the forefront, to carry the burden of serving in peace-keeping forces while others of greater resources and power not only refuse to pay their share of the cost but insist that the operation itself is illegal under the Charter.

That is why any small committee, set up to find a solution to the current dues-payment crisis, should also be asked to look into the whole question of the organization of peace-keeping operations under the Charter.

Then, finally, there are Canada's continental relations with her neighbour, who also happens to be the leader of what we, sometimes rather loosely, refer to as "the free world".

Good relations with the United States on the basis of mutual respect, of friendly co-operation rather than friendly domination, must be the very keystone of Canada's foreign policy.

Such a policy does not permit either automatic support or captious criticism. We must protect and advance our own national interests, but we should never forget that the greatest of these is peace and security. The achievement of this aim - it is chastening to realize - does not depend on our policies so much as it does on those of our neighbour. Therefore, the satisfaction we get from national identity and independence must be related to the requirements of interdependence and the recognition of the global responsibilities of the United States in the pursuit of objectives and values that we share.

This will mean, in practice, that our official doubts about certain U.S. foreign policies often should be expressed in private, through the channels of diplomacy, rather than publicly by speeches to Canadian Clubs. It does not mean that we must always remain silent if there is strong disagreement on matters of great moment or principle. Not at all. Canadians in official positions have more than once spoken very frankly about policies and actions of our neighbour. Washington ruefully refers to it as arm-twisting from a close friend. But we must never do this merely for the purpose of rousing a chauvinistic cheer at home. Pulling the eagle's tail feathers is an easy, but a dangerous, way to get a certain temporary popularity, as well as a feeling of self-satisfaction at having annoyed the big bird.

It's a form of indulgence that we should keep strictly under control - for national and international reasons.

A very good example of both the strength of the temptation and the necessity for control is to be found in the current situation in Vietnam.

We should be careful before hasty condemnation of U.S. retaliatory or deterrent reactions - a new phrase - against Communist Viet Cong attacks. We should remember that the Geneva arrangements of 1954 partitioned Vietnam and prohibited attacks from one side against the other; but the Northern Communist government, with Chinese backing, have from the beginning violated this agreement by continuous, Chinese-supported guerilla warfare in the South. There has been continuous armed provocation.

The other side of the picture is that there has been almost continuous failure on the South Vietnam side to deal with provocation from the North through their own political and military efforts. South Vietnam has had massive U.S. assistance, but we cannot overlook the fact that U.S. policies in Vietnam seem to have found no solid basis of support through a South Vietnam government of strength and popularity.

It's a confused and dangerous situation. The best solution, of course, would be to end foreign intervention and bring about a unified, independent, neutral Vietnam. But what chance has a unified Vietnam of becoming anything but a Communist Vietnam, not through popular decision but by Chinese imposition?

This is the basic problem that we must set beside the obvious danger that retaliation may escalate into war. So let us not oversimplify the problem, especially to justify easy criticism of U.S. policy.

On Monday of this week, the Government of India, through its Prime Minister, noting that there had been interference in Vietnam from many quarters and that one thing had led to another, appealed for "an immediate suspension of all provocative action in South Vietnam as well as North Vietnam by all sides". This is an appeal which I can heartily support, but, I add, only in its entirety.

The Indian Government also proposes negotiations through a Geneva-type conference to seek a peaceful and enduring solution. Technically speaking, such a meeting is not necessary, because the conference and agreement of 1954 made adequate provision for the independence of the various countries of former French Indochina. Nevertheless, if in the circumstances envisaged by the Indian Government, in which neither side would be exerting military pressure on the other, a conference of the kind indicated took place, the Canadian Government would be glad to take part in it as we did previously.

What are the alternatives?

(1) To let things go on as they are, hoping that the Viet Cong will eventually cease their attacks and that U.S. counteraction of the kind recently taken will not again be required.

A considerable amount of optimism is required to believe in this course.

(2) For the United States and the Vietnamese to use massive deterrent or retaliatory force against Communist bases in the North every time there is a Viet Cong attack in the South.

The argument for this is that it will force the Chinese-supported Viet Cong to leave South Vietnam alone and hence create a better atmosphere for a negotiation which could lead to foreign withdrawal and non-intervention.

Some degree of optimism is also required to reach this conclusion. Another, and less satisfactory, result might be a full-scale Far Eastern Chinese-American war.

So the situation is full of danger and Canada is directly interested in it. We have naturally expressed our concern to our neighbour. But at this time, and following the precepts I have mentioned, that concern is most likely to have maximum influence if it is expressed responsibly through diplomatic channels.

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