



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 53/37 Statement by the Chairman of the Canadian Delegation to the Eighth Session of the United Nations General Assembly, Mr. L.B. Pearson, made on September 23, 1953.

May I, in the first place, offer you, Madame President, my sincere congratulations and those of my delegation on your election as President of the Assembly, an honour well-deserved by the services that you and your country have given to the United Nations. As the President of the preceding Assembly, and for two long hours and 6 minutes the presiding officer of this one, I can assure you that my congratulations and good wishes are not coloured, even faintly, by envy!

The Eighth Assembly meets at a time when many think that the successful negotiation of some of the outstanding differences between the two major power groupings may be possible.

If there is any such happy possibility, it would be due, I think, not only to the armistice in Korea, or to changes on the other side of the Iron Curtain, but even more to the fact that in recent years a large part of the free, democratic world has learned to co-operate in purpose, policy and action for the defence of peace. Gradually, and not without difficulty, because we are speaking now of free and independent sovereign states, a unity and strength is developing, which is based on more than economic and military power. It is based also on a common belief in freedom and a determination to defend it against any reactionary and subversive forces which may threaten it.

Our co-operation is not synthetic; our unity is not imposed, nor is it of that monolithic type that Mr. Vyshinsky proudly ascribed yesterday to Soviet society. Honest differences, openly expressed, are bound to exist within and between free governments. Not only do we acknowledge them. At times we seem gratuitously to advertise them. But anyone who seeks to divide us, in the United Nations or elsewhere, by misinterpreting or exploiting these differences will soon find that the things that hold us together are far stronger and more enduring than those which, at times, seem to divide us.

If there are opportunities now for easing in some degree international tension, I hope that the eighth Assembly will use them to the full. We may not be able to change the facts of international life by resolutions in our Assembly. But by commission or omission, by what we say or do not say, we can lighten or darken the international atmosphere in which our problems must be solved.

The spirit of reason and conciliation which has for long animated the free peoples in approaching these problems was given eloquent and sincere expression in this Assembly

last Thursday by the Secretary of State of the United States. He reaffirmed our will to peace which is deep and abiding. On our side, that will to peace exists. Does it co-exist?

The Soviet bloc deny that our policies make for peace. They claim that our coalitions and our associations, particularly what they call the "aggressive North Atlantic bloc", are a menace to their security and are designed for aggressive war. Nothing could be more remote from reality than that charge.

It may be that their fear on this score is merely manufactured by propaganda as a cloak for plans and policies of their own, which in their turn rouse deep and anxious fear in us. But even if the Communist fear were genuine, it is unfounded. The peoples of our free coalition are passionately pacific, and its leader, the United States, as Canadians have special reason to know and appreciate, is one of the least imperialistically minded powers that ever had world leadership and responsibility thrust upon them. But even if anyone were tempted to believe these untrue Communist charges of American warmongering imperialism, does anyone really think that the United States could decree aggressive or provocative collective action by, say, the North Atlantic, the Inter-American or the Anzus groups?

Furthermore, this friendly association of other countries with the United States, some of which have had as tragic an experience of the miseries and destructions of war as the Soviet Union itself, should be a reassuring rather than a disturbing fact to all those who seek peace. As Mr. Dulles put it last Thursday:

"The Soviet leaders ... should know, and probably they do know, that community arrangements are the least likely to be aggressive. Military force which is within a single nation can be used offensively at the dictation of one government alone, sometimes of one man alone. Military force which is distributed throughout several countries cannot be used effectively unless all of the countries concerned are in agreement."

Then he added, and his words, I assure you, apply to my country:

"Such agreement would be totally unattainable except for operations responsive to the clear menace of aggression."

We of the free democratic countries must not and will not adopt any policy or take any action which could give any other state valid reason to fear for its security or for its legitimate national interests. Such interests, however do not include, as making for peace (and here I quote with complete agreement from Mr. Vyshinsky's speech of Monday last) "a policy which professedly is designed to explode the social or political structure of any other country".

But Communist doctrine, in our eyes, professes just that. That is one reason why we feel a deep, genuine fear -- not a fear, as Mr. Vyshinsky said, "artificially stimulated by the Pentagon." That fear flows also from the loss of freedom in Eastern Europe, from the Berlin blockade, from Korea, from the awful dangers of totalitarian tyranny, and from 175 Soviet divisions - if that is the figure - ready to march.

Mr. Spaak of Belgium put our feelings as eloquently and succinctly as they have ever been put when he said to the General Assembly in 1948:

"The Soviet delegate need not look for complicated explanations of our policy. I will tell him what is the basis of our policy - in terms, perhaps slightly cruel, but which only the representative of a small nation could use: Do you know what is the basis of our policy? It is fear of you, fear of your government, fear of your policy!" Then he went on:

"I use the word 'fear' but the fear I have in mind is not that of a coward or of a minister representing a frightened country, a country ready to ask for mercy and beg for pity. No, it is not that kind of fear. It is the fear which should be felt by a man when he peers into the future and realizes all the possible horror, tragedy and terrible responsibility held in store by that future.

"Does the U.S.S.R. delegation know why the Western European countries are afraid? They are afraid because the U.S.S.R. Delegation often speaks of imperialism.

"What is the definition and current notion of imperialism? It is usually the notion of a nation - generally a great power - that effects conquests and increases its influence throughout the world.

"What is the historic truth that has emerged from the recent years? It is that one great country alone has emerged from the war having conquered other territories - and that great country is the Soviet Union ..."

"The empire of the U.S.S.R. stretches from the Far East to the Baltic Sea and from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean, and is now also felt on the banks of the Rhine ... and then the U.S.S.R. wonders why the other nations feel anxious!"

The echo of those words of M. Spaak, spoken five years ago, has not faded from our minds.

With these fears still haunting us, and with the sure knowledge that weakness in this world is a provocation and not a protection, we intend to become strong and remain strong, until security can rest on a better and more lasting foundation even than strength.

I am aware, of course, that fear on one side often results in action which causes new fear on the other side; and that this provokes counter-action, which in its turn brings about even greater fear. So a vicious circle is begun, which goes on and on until it is either cut through in the right way, by sincere negotiation and wise political decisions, or in the wrong way, by war; which now means atomic annihilation.

If these are, then, the alternatives, and if by our policies we make the latter choice inevitable, then George Bernard Shaw was certainly right when he said: "If the other planets are inhabited, the earth is their lunatic asylum."

Yet, it is all too apparent that the tide of world affairs, for the past seven years, have been flowing in one direction - sometimes faster, sometimes slower, but always, unhappily in the direction of a possible catastrophe that might leave in the rubble little worth salvaging of what we

are still able to call civilization.

The growing unity and strength of the Western democracies, however, and the confidence that is beginning to come from this; the events of the last few months, and in particular the conclusion of an armistice in Korea, may give us now a chance to move away from possible co-destruction and toward a co-existence which will be more than a word.

I do not mean to suggest of course that an era of sweetness and light is just around the corner. Nor will it be ushered in merely by changes of tactics or by paper promises of peace. But it does seem that there is at least more hope now for progress towards real peace than there was when the seventh Assembly opened almost a year ago. Whether this is wishful thinking or not, such progress is the fundamental purpose to which our United Nations is dedicated. We are, in all conscience, bound to keep everlastingly trying to bring about a better state of international relations; for if we fail in this we fail, sooner or later, in everything.

Faced with this task then, we should ask ourselves among other things if our present methods of diplomacy, inside or outside the United Nations, are adequate and effective enough for the purposes of negotiating differences, when the opportunity for such negotiation presents itself.

The United Nations is a place where we can meet either to settle problems or make settlement more difficult. It is a place where we can try to find collective solutions, or one which we can use to get support and publicity for purely national solutions. It is a place where we can talk to each other with a view to securing general agreement, or to the television and radio audiences in order to explain that disagreement is the fault of somebody else.

In any event, whatever face the United Nations now presents to the public is enlarged to alarming proportions by all media of information which now carry our words, our attitudes, even our appearances to the ends of the earth.

I know that without the active participation of world agencies of communication and information, this experiment in world organization could not succeed, because it would not be able to secure popular support. But the United Nations has, or should have, a private as well as a public face. There should be opportunities here for other than public appearances. A television panel discussion can be instructive and entertaining, but it is no substitute for direct consultation or for that old-fashioned diplomacy which is becoming more respectable by comparison with some of its gaudier, but not always more responsible or restrained successors.

It is, of course, essential that all free peoples should know and understand the great issues of policy which may mean life or death for them. But it is not essential, as I see it, indeed it is often harmful, for the negotiation of policy always to be conducted in glass houses which are often too tempting a target for brickbats. It is all too easy to strike attitudes in public, only to find later that we are stuck with them. Open diplomacy now tends to become frozen diplomacy.

I'm sure that we can all think of subjects that have come before us in recent Assemblies that could have been more constructively discussed and more easily settled if previously there had been quiet and confidential discussion of them

between delegations and governments, especially between those which were in disagreement over the matters in question.

And it is my feeling that the opportunities for such consultation at United Nations meetings seems to be diminishing, and a kind of "group" discussion is on the other hand increasing, the results of which are often in one form or another made public almost before the discussions have taken place. If we are not careful - useful as these discussions are - these publicly confidential discussions may cause the United Nations to lose in prestige as a place where opposing views can be constructively considered, and where their reconciliation can at least be attempted in an efficient and businesslike way.

But whatever methods we adopt, the fear and tension which now grips the whole world will not be reduced until some of the current international issues which divide us are successfully resolved; either by the United Nations, or by those states, acting, if necessary, outside the United Nations, who have the main share of responsibility for international peace and security.

In his penetrating address last Thursday, Mr. Dulles pointed to certain of these problems. If concrete progress and not mere talk about peaceful intentions can be achieved in solving some of these problems, here in the United Nations or elsewhere, we will then, but only then, have any real ground for hope; for only then will our words have been confirmed by actions.

The two principal issues which will test the reality behind the talk, are Germany and Korea. The latter issue, which is before us, Korea, has now narrowed down to the political conference to be held under Paragraph 60 of the armistice agreement.

The countries which fought in Korea on the United Nations side sent their troops there for no other purpose than to help repel aggression, declared as such by a United Nations decision.

So far as the Canadian Government is concerned, we will not support any military action in Korea which is not United Nations action, and we would be opposed to any attempt to interpret existing United Nations objectives as including for instance the unification of Korea by force. On the other hand, we are aware that the signing of an armistice does not discharge us from obligations we have already undertaken in Korea as a member of the United Nations.

To convert this armistice into peace, the Political Conference must meet. There is no other way. Less than a month ago the seventh Assembly made provision for the United Nations side of this meeting. True, this was done in a way which did not meet the full wishes of certain delegations, including my own. But the decision was made, and, after long and exhaustive debate, the composition of the Conference on the United Nations side was decided, which, if not perfect, should be satisfactory for the purpose we have in mind; making peace in Korea. Surely it would be wrong merely because the Communist Governments of Peking and North Korea demand it, to reopen at once the whole matter and try to reverse our decision after such a short interval.

Insistence, for instance, by the Communist side that the Korean Conference cannot convene unless the United Nations agree that the U.S.S.R. be present as a "neutral" member would

surely throw serious doubt on their desire to have the conference meet at all.

We have the right to expect that the Communist Governments to whom our resolutions have been forwarded should now without delay designate their own representatives, and express their views regarding time and place.

Once the conference meets there will be ample opportunity to iron out other difficulties which may arise. But are these of sufficient consequence to justify the other side in boycotting this necessary first step in peace-making, not only in Korea, but perhaps over a broader area?

For it is surely not too much to hope that if we are successful in negotiating on a specific and defined range of questions, we may succeed also in strengthening the prospects for the settlement over wider Asian issues; not necessarily through the same mechanism which we have recommended for the Korea Conference.

But for this wider objective to be achieved or even approached, we must first succeed in making peace in Korea. If - and this is a big "if" - there is good faith and good will on both sides, a settlement here should be possible. I suggest that any such settlement must provide for a free and united Korea, with a government resting on the will of the Korean people freely expressed through elections held under United Nations supervision. All foreign forces should, of course, be withdrawn, and Korea's security might be provided for under an international and supervised guarantee.

The Korean problem is certainly not an insoluble one. If a fair and lasting solution is desired it can be found. It is certainly desired by the vast majority of the members of the United Nations I am sure. If the Communist side, or anyone else, by obstruction and inadmissible demands make a peaceful solution impossible, then the responsibility for failure will be made clear, and the United Nations, at least, will have done its duty.

Korea, in short, will provide an acid test for the hope and claim that successful negotiation can and must be conducted now, not only on the future of Korea but on European and cold war problems generally, in order to bring about an easing of fear and tension, and a peace which will be something better than cold war.

There is another respect in which Korea is an acid test; in the assistance we give the Korean people to restore and rehabilitate their country, ravaged and devastated by war.

I am certain this Assembly will agree with the Secretary-General, Mr. Hammarskjold, that it is of high importance that this collective responsibility for reconstruction and rehabilitation in Korea "should be carried out honourably, vigorously and generously by the United Nations and with the widest possible participation of its members."

In referring to Korea as a supreme test, I am well aware that the obstacles to agreement, like the present divisions in our world, may seem great. Yet we can remind ourselves that, as it has been said, the longest journey must begin with a single step. It is the belief of the country which I represent, and I am sure of the overwhelming majority of the countries represented here, that, if this all-important first step - to co-operate in bringing peace to Korea - is taken by those who speak in the name of the world community in

this Assembly, the long journey towards a wider peace will have begun.

Madame President, this is a general debate, but I do not propose to comment on other issues, many of them very important, which will come before us. There will be time enough for this in the weeks ahead.

This eighth Assembly, like its predecessors now faces a long and complex programme of work. The problems before the eighth session, in the formal enumeration of our official agenda, reflect the basic conflicts and high tensions of our divided world. Ultimate judgments on the utility or the futility of this Organization will be based on the extent to which we make these items on our agenda the signposts to action and practical achievement.

The Canadian delegation will do its best to make a worthwhile contribution to this essential result, and thereby serve the high purposes of peace that bring us together.

S/C