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THE UNITED NATIONS, THE MIDDLE EAST AND CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICY

Address by Mr. L.B. Pearson, Secretary of State for External Affairs, to a Joint Meeting of the Men's and Women's Canadian Clubs, Halifax, Nova Scotia, April 5, 1957

On October 31 last the world faced with uncertainty and fear developments in the Middle East which seemed to threaten the peace; and not only peace in that area. The United Nations Assembly in New York faced a crisis in its existence because of those developments. The Canadian Government and Canada's delegation to that Assembly, caught, as other delegations were, by surprise and with little time for consultation with Commonwealth or other friendly governments, faced the necessity of making some quick and difficult decisions in dramatic, even distressing circumstances.

The threat to world peace, of course, arose out of the possibility that the conflict between Israel and Egypt would be exploited by the U.S.S.R. for its own purposes and in a way to widen and deepen the conflict.

Today, the danger of a war of general atomic obliteration - because that is what it would be - comes not so much from calculated all-out military aggression as from a miscalculation of forces and of reactions to actions which may be meant to cause local trouble only. As long as the Western coalition maintains its strength and the unity which is an essential part of that strength; as long as the aggressor knows that an attack by him will meet with swift, sure and smashing retaliation, the atomic deterrent will probably work and peace, such as it is, will continue to balance itself uneasily on terror; while we search, as we must strive to do, for a more secure foundation for it.

The greater danger is that some accidental or miscalculated, but fatal, move may be made by the forces of communist imperialism in Moscow, or that bitter and uncompromising governments in countries which have only recently acquired control of their own affairs - morbidly suspicious and assertive - might invite to their assistance those same communist forces with results as unforeseen as they would be disastrous.

This danger was in all our minds during those fateful days last autumn. It may have lessened since then but it still exists. Whether it was increased or decreased by the intervention of the United Nations in its effort to bring about an end to the military action of Israel, and later that of the United Kingdom and France, against Egypt is something over which men can and will differ for a long time. I happen to think myself, and I say this in no dogmatic manner, that action by the United Nations at that time may have prevented a bitter, unrelenting and destructive division, or worse, between the Arab, and most of the Asian world on the one hand, and the West on the other; and that in these turbulent waters the communists would have found and exploited an ideal fishing ground with unhappy and perhaps tragic results. The strains and stresses of this conflict on the Commonwealth association because of the pro-Arab feelings of its Asian members would also have been great, perhaps insupportable.

While the fighting in Egypt may have ceased, I have no illusions about the continuing threat to general peace coming from Israeli-Arab hatred and hostility and the instability and insecurity of the whole Middle East area. Nevertheless, I repeat that in my view the situation would have become worse by now if the United Nations had not intervened.

That intervention, however, is far from having been completed. The United Nations has stopped the fighting. It has brought about the withdrawal of foreign forces from Egypt, though not, in the case of Israel, through the kind of clear and specific arrangements which we favoured but were not able to secure. But the United Nations or its Members have not yet done much about the situation which brought about military intervention in the first place. Until they do, there is no reason to be satisfied or to come to any final and approving conclusions about our work in New York.

The question, then, whether the United Nations should or should not have intervened last October is one that historians will argue about for years. The question whether Canada should or should not have joined the United Kingdom and France in opposing such intervention is one which does not have to await reference to the historians for an argument. It has already been widely debated and perhaps we will be hearing a good deal about it in the noisy weeks ahead.

So far as the United Nations is concerned, once military action had been taken by Israel - and later by the United Kingdom and France - no matter whether we supported or regretted that action, its intervention was inevitable. Surely with Arab and Asian members feeling as they did, and with Russia gleefully seizing an opporrunity to cause trouble - and take our minds off her own brutal aggression in Hungary - it was obvious that the United Nations would be brought into the situation; first via the Security Council and, when the veto made action by that body impossible, via the General Assembly under the "Uniting for Peace" Resolution. Indeed, if the United Nations had not intervened it

would have been an admission, perhaps a final admission, of its impotence in the prevention or ending of local conflicts.

The problem for the Canadian Delegation in New York, then was whether to join the small minority of members - six - who disapproved United Nations action; or whether to agree with the other 73 that some from of United Nations intervention was justified. We took the latter course, and then tried to ensure as best we could that this intervention would be effective not only for bringing the fighting to an end, but for preventing its renewal and, most important of all, for doing something about the situation that had caused the fighting in the first place.

That situation centres around the Arab-Israeli conflict; and we are not likely to have peace in the Middle East until that conflict can be resolved, or at least reduced.

Its root cause, as I see it, is fear, which breeds distrust, animosity and ultimately clash and conflict. May I quote what I said about this at the UN Assembly last February.

> "There has been fear on the one side of extermination by neighbours whose hostility to the creation and continued existence of the State of Israel has been strong and unremitting. It is difficult for people to act with the moderation and restraint through which wisdom expresses itself if they believe that they themselves live in the shadow of destruction and are uncertain about their very survival as a nation.
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> "The fear from which the people of Israel suffer, the fear which explains the violence of reprisals which they have taken against their neighbours, will be on the way to elimination when the Arab states are willing to recognize Israel as a sovereign state, and its right to national existence within accepted boundaries and under conditions of life tolerable to its people. There were some signs a year ago that we might at least be approaching a time when the Arab states would be willing to grant Israel this recognition. Unfortunately, the events of last autumn have reversed that trend. It must now be one of our major aims to help set again in motion the forces which will lead to the early recognition of Israel in normal terms by its neighbours, and thus to the removal of fear.
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> "On the other side, however, there is also fear, which has led to extreme policies and to violence. Among the Arab states there is a deep and understandable apprehension that the displacement of population and the political tension already associated with a new state, most of whose citizens have come from abroad, a new state established in the midst of the Arab people, may be followed by still further dislocations owing to the pressure of

immigration into Israel, backed as that state is by strong international pressures and international resources. There is a fear that Israel will yield to expansionist ambitions, which is the counterpart of Israel's own fear of Arab intentions. This has bred in the Arab world animosity and violence toward Israel. When that fear is dissipated we may count on moderation in the attitude of Israel's neighbours toward that state. We cannot but agree that if Israel has a right to live and prosper, freed from the fear of strangulation by its neighbours, the Arab states also have a right to feel confident that Israel will not attempt to expand its territory at their expense; the right to be assured that if Israel, however, should at any time develop such ambitions it will receive no encouragement, but meet only opposition on both the official and non-official level from the outside world, an opposition which would result in the isolation of the State itself from any international assistance or support."

Facing the situation created by the explosion into fighting of Israel's fears for its security and for its very existence, the Canadian Delegation in New York had to try to reconcile three sets of obligations, arising from:

(1) membership in the United Nations and acceptance of its Charter;

(2) membership in the British Commonwealth of Nations;

(3) membership in the Western coalition, the leader of which is, and must be if only from the facts of power and resources, the United States.

As a member of the United Nations we felt it our duty to support a cease-fire and efforts to bring about peace in the area - and peace means more than ceasing to fire.

As a member of the Commonwealth we had a duty to co-operate to the maximum extent possible with the United Kingdom and the other members; and if and when we differed, to make sure that those differences were resolved as quickly as possible and did not drive us into purely negative courses, or into mere condemnation or recrimination.

Our problem was graphically illustrated by the first resolution on which we had, very quickly, to take a stand sometime after midnight November 1. On that first resolution, for a cease-fire, the Commonwealth itself was badly split. It is easy to think of the Commonwealth primarily in terms of the United Kingdom, the core and centre of which it is, with a group of free, Anglo-Saxon nations around it. But today three of its members are Asian and more than four-fifths of its people come from these three Asian countries.

On the first resolution, then, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand were opposed; India, Pakistan and Ceylon strongly in favour. Canada and South Africa abstained. Our position was that while we supported the cease-fire in principle, the resolution did nothing to organize any United Nations machinery to supervise and secure it; or to recognize that the United Nations had responsibility for dealing with the issues which brought about the military intervention. We thought the resolution was inadequately drawn and too hastily put to a vote.

We knew that same evening, however, that both the United States and the United Kingdom would support a move on our part to set up a United Nations Emergency Force to operate in the area in order to make a resumption of hostilities more difficult. So from that time we devoted our efforts largely to this matter, with the full support of our friends in London, the other Commonwealth countries, and in Washington. In this effort, and in other Middle East discussions to follow, any difference of opinion which we had with the United Kingdom over the advisability of the original intervention did not interfere with the closest and, as the United Kingdom Prime Minister has put it, "the most comradely" contact.

We have never condemned, though we regretted, the military action which the United Kingdom felt it necessary to take after the Israeli troops marched. We have tried to understand the provocations behind and the reasons for that action; especially the vital importance to the United Kingdom of a Suez Canal "insulated from the policies of any single government". On its part, the United Kingdom has, I think, respected the motives behind our policies; our desire to remove or mitigate differences and disunity between friends by working out constructive measures at the United Nations; and our anxiety to keep the Commonwealth from splitting apart into Eastern - Western groups with perhaps fatal results to an association which has meant, and still means, so much to the world.

It was a distressing experience for any Canadian delegate at the United Nations not to be able to give full support to the United Kingdom on all matters at the UN last autumn. When we differed, it was with reluctance. Canadian policy, however, at the United Nations and elsewhere has to be determined primarily by Canadian considerations, and Canadian interests, and, in my opinion, requires that Canada should not automatically follow any other government, however close and friendly, But at the same time, we should not pursue this Canadian policy in any narrow, selfish way, but with a full realization that the greatest Canadian national interest is international peace and security and that this interest is prejudiced when there is division within the Commonwealth or between London and Washington and Paris.

Lest it may appear that this feeling I have expressed for the Commonwealth is a recent growth from the shock of the

controversies of last autumn, perhaps I may be pardoned for quoting from a speech I made in Halifax on January 26, 1952. I said then, and I repeat now:

> "...It should be and is a first principle of Canadian policy to maintain and strengthen the Commonwealth association, under the Crown, which is and will remain not only its symbol, but which also demonstrates the continuity of our own history and the depth of its roots.
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> "Our Commonwealth of Nations is continually renewing its usefulness in different forms. It is of particular value at the present time in that it acts, through its three Asian members, as a bridge, one of the few bridges, between the East and the West. We cannot, I think, stress too much or too often the importance of our family of nations in this regard. It is one of the great new services that the Commonwealth is giving the world."

There remains the third of the international obligations which were bound to influence our attitude at the United Nations during the last Assembly, and, indeed, which should influence our approach to international problems generally. This is our obligation to the Western coalition, of which we are a member, to take no avoidable action which weakens its unity and strength; particularly as it is organized in NATO.

No one, especially no Canadian, can feel anything but the deepest regret and the most acute worry when our neighbours to the South and our Mother Country disagree, except those communist forces who see in such disagreement a great help to their own aggressive designs. Those forces were full of glee last autumn, just as they are now trying to conceal their chagrin and disappointment at the encouraging results of the Bermuda Conference. But just as all Canadians felt, I think, a special anxiety when the policies of the United Kingdom and the United States diverged last autumn over the Middle East, so they felt a corresponding relief when they began to come together again - as they have done.

It is a first principle of Canadian foreign policy to co-operate closely with the two countries with whom every impulse of sentiment, history, self-interest, trade and geography counsels such co-operation. We must try to keep in step with both the United Kingdom and the United States, but that is not easy when they are not in step with each other. We are in trouble then, as we were at the United Nations last autumn over this break in the united front.

This is no time for recrimination over the past, but for restoration of unity of policy and purpose among friends. Examination of the past is only useful if it helps us to avoid mistakes in the future. Perhaps, then, we will profit in the field of North Atlantic co-operation from its collapse over the Suez. I certainly hope so. But I venture to say - and my view is founded on an experience extending now over some years in the

conduct of international affairs - that this desirable result will not be achieved, unless there is closer, more frank and more continuous consultation over policies, especially in the NATO Council, in the future than there has been in the past. Surely this should be a first requirement for every member of the coalition.

It should not be assumed that if Canada differs with the United Kingdom on any issue, even temporarily, that this difference is either the cause or the result of some alignment with the United States. Canada must, as a free nation, decide questions on her own responsibility, and not follow automatically any one, however desirous we may be of promoting unity within the group. There are bound to be influences and impulses that have an effect on our policies. Some of them I have mentioned. But we are no satellite of any other body, and this includes that magnetic and dynamic and, at times, almost overwhelming political body to the south of us.

May I again quote from what I said on this matter five years ago, because I think the sentiment is just as valid now as it was then:

> "So far as the United States is concerned, there are no two countries in the world whose relations are closer and more intimate than those between our two countries. ... Naturally, as the United States possesses so much the greatest power in the free world coalition, and as its influence is correspondingly greater than the others, the rest of us are preoccupied, at times intensely preoccupied, as to how that power will be used and how that leadership will be exercised. This is, of course, a perfectly natural reaction. This actual disparity of power, however, has to be reconciled with the legal equality of all states inside the coalition. We are all free and equal in theory, and we cherish that theory on which our national freedom is based. So, naturally, we speak and act as free states, not as the communist satellites in a Kremlin camp. I am quite sure that the United States would not have it otherwise, because otherwise our support would not be worth having. ..."

I think that Canada's record at the last United Nations Assembly supports this theory of friendship and neighbourliness, without subservience or dependence.

On three important Middle Eastern resolution we were, to our regret, unable to vote with the United States delegation, on six, happily, we were. We were also not able to accept a United States invitation to sponsor an important resolution, with them and others, because we did not think it went far enough in providing for United Nations control in Gaza and on the demarcation line after the withdrawal of Israeli forces. And we let the United States delegation know that we would have to vote against any resolution of sanctions against Israel in the circumstances that existed, whatever they might be.

It is not easy for a middle power, such as Canada, with a special relationship of friendship and interest with countries like the United Kingdom and the United States, to know when to give up a national position in the interests of harmony in the group, or when to stand firm. It requires a nice, but often a difficult balancing of advantages and disadvantages.

Canadian policy, for instance, must be national in formulation and execution, but it can never, or at least should never, be isolationist or exclusive. It must, of course, as I have said, protect Canadian interests, but the greatest Canadian interest, in this thermo-nuclear age, is peace. And we know that there can be no guarantee of peace through national policy, or no safe refuge from danger in national isolation.

There may be times - I hope they will be few - when, as a free and self-reliant nation, we will have to go our own way irrespective of what our closest friends do. But that must be only after we have done everything possible to avoid such a course. That is my concept of Canadian nationalism in foreign policy. It does not include being sensitive about charges of colonialism when we are in full accord with Downing Street, as we so very often are; or about allegations of being a satellite of the United States when we are in agreement with American decisions.

I return, once again, however, to that essential purpose of Canadian policy: the promotion by every means within its power accord between London and Washington. To anyone subjected to the day-by-day problems of Canada's international relations, as I am, it seems almost impossible to over-emphasize the importance of this. It means a fuller understanding of each other's point of view across the Atlantic. It means, perhaps, if not less reliance on Magna Charta and Shakespeare and our common heritage, at least far more reliance on the cold, hard facts of self-interest and security. The United States and the United Kingdom need each other; need to count on each other; need each other's support in a dangerous world, more than they need anything else. And Canada needs them both.

Perhaps this essential understanding, based more on realities than sentimentalities, would be easier to achieve if the British could always remember and respect the vast burden of world-wide responsibility now being borne by the United States; not sought by her but accepted generously and carried gallantly; before, perhaps, the United States was ready to receive it.

It would help also if Americans could remember - there is certainly less chance of Canadians forgetting it - that the British have carried this burden for generations to the benefit of humanity, and that in the process they have saved freedom

twice in our life time.

It is largely because of the efforts they have made in discharging this responsibility, and in the sacrifice of blood and treasure which was so gallantly made, and of which we are all the beneficiaries, that today the British are no longer able to carry the burden alone.

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