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THE STRENGTH OF FREEDOM

An address by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. L.B. Pearson, at a meeting held under the auspices of B'nai B'rith, at Guelph, Ontario, February 2, 1953.

It is a cliché worn to the point of threadbarness, to say that we live in a critical time in the world's history. But it is terribly true. Furthermore, while we can always hope for something better and must strive to achieve it, we would, I think, be wise to plan our national existence on the assumption that this crisis may be with us for a long time.

Military aggression has already broken out in one corner of the globe. The threat of it persists at other points. There is always the overhanging horror of a general all-out war of atomic obliteration.

All this results from the adaptation and exploitation by one of the oldest imperialisms in history of a doctrine, Communism, which now holds sway over the minds of millions of men in every part of the world.

The evil combination of military might, political infiltration, and psychological pressure, operating both through aggressive action or the threat of it, and the creation of internal divisions at home, constitutes a menace which only the most naive person can refuse to take seriously.

How to meet and defeat this threat, and, at the same time, preserve our fundamental liberties, protect the sources of our moral strength, and promote human welfare, is the great challenge of our age.

To meet the menace of Communism, however, we must understand it. Yet one of the primary purposes of the Communists and their Russian masters is to prevent or obscure such understanding.

We should recognize in the first place that a main objective of Communism is to split up the Western world and to create divisions between states and between groups within states.

For this purpose, it strives to plant, in the policies of governments and in the minds of individuals, doubts, suspicions and fears. It exploits every opportunity - and it is given plenty - to frustrate co-operation within the free world to separate us from our friends, especially from the United States; and to crumble the confidence of the free man in his institutions and in himself.

This Communist policy changes its outward forms and trappings according to circumstances and tactical requirements; but never its long-term aim, which is the complete overthrow of every form of society which is not based on revolutionary Marxism as interpreted and practiced - and this is important - in Moscow. In seeking to achieve their aim, which is implicit in the Communist doctrine itself, the architects of this world revolution do their best to exploit for their own purposes and to our disadvantage, two fears which understandably worry us these days: fear of Soviet strength, fear of the enemy in our midst.

There is, of course, a very real basis for each of these fears and it would be folly - and might mean disaster - to under-estimate them. But if we allow them to drive us into panic, and if we base our plans, domestically and internationally, on that panic, these fears can themselves become a danger almost as great as the grim reality behind them.

Let us take first the fear of Soviet strength and of aggression.

The danger of external aggression is very real. This the free world has recognized for some time and has acted collectively and with vigour - especially in NATO - to meet it. While we were engaged in doing this by building a dyke against attack in Europe, the Communists launched a planned and calculated aggression in Korea; in an action which might be called "propaganda of the deed". It was essentially a deliberate act, designed to stun and to frighten off the nations of the free world and to bring about collapse through panic.

But contrary to the plans of the Kremlin, the Korean aggression inspired, not inaction through fear, but collective resistance to overcome the basis of that fear. The fear boomeranged against those who sought to crush us.

We learned that conquest was the fate of the weak and the isolated; not of the strong and the united. So we began to build up a powerful deterrent force in Europe, and to organize United Nations action against aggression in Korea, as our reply to this Communist military intimidation. If we do not yield to the temptation to rest on our oars, now that there has been some easing of international tension in parts of Europe, we need not doubt the success of this great collective defence effort by which Communist aggression and expansionism can be deterred, or, if it is attempted, defeated.

Fear, then, inspired by actual and threatened aggression has had good results in the field of collective defence. It has spurred us into action. Those results, however, will be changed for the worse if, because of this fear, we go too far in our defence plans and policies; if they become provocative militarily in Europe or in Asia and crippling economically. At the moment, however, this is certainly the lesser danger. The greater danger is that we may ease up and think that because no one committed all-out aggression in 1953 it won't happen in 1954 - 1955 - 1956.

The second attack by the forces of fear is on the home front. Here the problem is one which should neither be minimized nor exaggerated.

In every period of serious external danger, the threat from outside is accompanied by, and indeed often brings about, an internal threat inside. And so it is at present.

In such a situation - as in all-out war itself - we inevitably and understandably emphasize the security of the society above the rights of the individual. In all-out war, this indeed is essential, if victory and thereby salvation is to be ensured. In what we call "cold war", certain individual rights may also have to be subordinated to the interests of security. When, however, measures for this purpose go beyond the immediate and urgent necessities of the situation, they produce a new fear, which the Communists can and do exploit, fear for the weakening or the loss of our fundamental freedoms.

The necessity for domestic security measures at this time of international danger, is made more real and more obvious by the presence in our midst of members or followers of the Communist party; men who are tied body and soul to the Kremlin, who follow obediently and automatically every twist and turn of its policy; who have boasted that they would not defend their own land if there were armed attack from that quarter. These are the "crypto-Canadians". There is nothing more hypocritical than their prating or scribbling about Canadian nationalism and independence, or about Canadian political and personal liberties.

This domestic threat from local Communists - like the external danger - is a real one. Let's not fool ourselves about that. It requires vigilance, protective measures and, whenever necessary effective action.

In our own day in Canada we have seen the tangible evidences of links and associations between Soviet imperialism and the Soviet state apparatus, and Communists in our midst. The "spy trials" of 1946 are an object lesson in their exposure of the technique of conspiratorial Communism. To protect itself against subversive acts of this kind, and against similar action in other sensitive fields, the democratic state must act promptly and courageously against those who commit offences against the laws and the security of the state.

There are also the dupes as well as the disciples of Communism. Perhaps one of the most difficult features of the problem of Communism in our midst is the way in which its practitioners camouflage and conceal their true purpose, and attempt to confuse and mislead the unwary and the gullible; to use them as bait on a red hook "made in Moscow". We are only too familiar with the way in which organizations with worthy purposes have been infiltrated, and how the idea of "peace" has been debased by these people for their own ends. This is a serious aspect of the problem which requires good sense and vigilance on the part of us all. We must learn to judge organizations by what they do, not by what their Communist spokesmen say; we must distinguish between pretension and performance; we must ceaselessly expose the fallacies in their special pleading.

Take the Communist so-called "Canadian Peace Congress" which has attracted too many of these well intentioned dupes. There is no doubt that this organization slavishly and unswervingly follows the line laid down by Moscow and is under direction and control from that centre.

I had an experience in New York recently which proves this.

On November 20, Mr. James Endicott sent me, as President of the United Nations General Assembly, a letter on behalf of the "Canadian Peace Congress" which included this:

"We welcome Canada's positive attitude towards the Indian proposal on prisoners of war and trust the discussions around this proposal will lead to a final solution."

I replied, noting, and with satisfaction, their support for the Indian resolution, which, as you know, the Canadian delegation was backing strongly.

A subsequent letter was sent to me a few days later by the same Congress. By this time, however, Mr. Vyshinsky had laid down the Soviet line with unmistakable clarity. Therefore, the second letter from the "Peace Congress" merely echoed the Soviet appeal for an immediate "cease-fire", without any prior agreement on an armistice or for the release of prisoners; matters which were to be left for later decision to a Commission on which the Communists had a veto. This second letter made no mention whatever of the Indian proposal which the Congress has welcomed only a few days before but which now had been damned by Mr. Vyshinsky, its representative at the U.N. Assembly, as a "rotten compromise". Of course, one must feel a certain sympathy for the Comrades. Moscow is some distance away, it takes time to send out the orders. Occasionally, they don't catch up with the changes subsequently decided on, and the local Communists are subjected to the humiliating spectacle of meeting themselves doubling back. It's also not easy always to remember whether one of the Cominform is still a hero-worker and disciple - of the great leader - or a rogue and a wrecker who was liquidated the day before. But this is an aside.

While certain Communist leaders behind the Iron Curtain are literally losing their heads these days, we must not figuratively lose ours as we confront their few followers in Canada.

Nor should we permit our legitimate concern with their treacherous activities to obscure the other threat which I have already mentioned; that to those freedoms - of speech, of worship, of thought and of action which we have won over the years, and which now distinguish us from those who live under despotism either of the right or the left. We should not falter now in our support of those well tried principles of justice and the rule of law, of tolerance and understanding which constitute the foundation on which democratic society is based and without which it cannot survive.

We would have little cause to worry about the loss of these essential attributes of freedom were it not for the fears inspired by our knowledge that the Kremlin has in every non-Communist country its fifth column of disciples and its sixth column of dupes. These fears can lead to demands for extreme procedures and counter-measures which go beyond the requirements of the situation, and which, if carried to their logical but probably inevitable conclusion, might produce a remedy almost as bad, and with about the same result, as the disease.

This other threat, this counter-threat to our freedom, though in Canada it has not yet reached the danger point, is one against which free democracies should be on guard. Otherwise we may one day find that we have created a tyranny in the name of protection against tyranny.

I, for one, have too much confidence in my country and countrymen to believe that a small group of wilful, frustrated, twisted men can destroy it, even in the circumstances of the present. I am satisfied that, if we continue to keep in Canada a strong, healthy and free society, alert to the dangers around and within us, but not hysterical about them, these Communists in our midst can be left to the due process of law, whenever and wherever they break the law. If further measures against them are required, then the law can be changed. But let us be careful about proceeding by improvisation or by arbitrary action. Communist subversive activity, by provoking excessive and unwise retaliatory measures may conceivably weaken us more than by the direct damage it does.

The danger from Communism can also be increased in other ways by our own actions; ways which delight the Kremlin and play its nefarious game. One such way is by magnifying everything they do and say and giving it unnecessary and even misleading publicity.

We do this regularly and distressingly with international Communism. A good example of this has been the world headlines that were given Stalin at Christmas time by putting all the prestige of a great newspaper at his disposal when its diplomatic correspondent played with the Kremlin that question-and-answer game, which now has a larger audience than any radio quiz programme. You can call it, if you like, "Nineteen hundred and fifty-three questions", but no one gets a reward from it, except Communist propaganda.

Similarly, at home, look at the attention we give men like Endicott. Believe me, he revels in this free publicity, as do his masters who recently gave him a Stalin prize. He certainly earned that prize, but for services to Stalin, not to peace. The two things are no more related than is the aim of the "Canadian Peace Congress" to the real peace which all true Canadians seek.

Exposure then, of Communist aims and treacheries is one thing. Giving them the kind of exaggerated publicity they desire is something else. We must not be deceived by their pretence of peaceful patriotism and co-operation. But we must also not inflate their power and influence to the point where fear of them saps the roots of that trust and confidence in our laws and in our liberties and in ourselves, which is essential to the functioning of democratic society.

Once such confidence is replaced by manufactured and exaggerated suspicion, repressive legislation and unnecessary administrative interference can easily follow. This, in its turn, provokes internal divisions, and bitter controversies which weaken our strength and our solidarity. It is a vicious process, and exactly what the Communist leaders wish. The stronger we become to resist external aggression, the more anxious the Communists are to weaken and divide us internally, especially by fostering suspicions, setting class against class, group against group, person against person.

We assist in that work if we permit or encourage witch hunting, guilt by association, accusation by implication; if we sit idly by and allow all the progressive elements in our society to be lumped with Communists as "reds". We have not approached this position in Canada, and I hope we never will. But it is something, as I have said, that we should be on guard against - as a secondary result of the Communist infection.

By all means, let us protect ourselves against those who would practice, or conspire to practice treason and sedition. Let us pursue them, unmask them and, if they have broken the law, punish them. But we should not confuse political heresy with political treason, or dissent with disloyalty. Nor should Canadians be frightened into conformity by making it dangerous to hold, to express, or to advocate unpopular doctrines. No society can be free and healthy where this occurs, no matter to what heights its national income may soar.

Mr. Truman, of Independence, Missouri, put this view forcefully and eloquently in his State of the Union message on January 7, when he said:

"...One of the things that could defeat us is fear - fear of the task we face, fear of adjusting to it, fear that breeds more fear, sapping our faith, corroding our liberties, turning citizen against citizen, ally against ally. Fear could snatch away the very values we are striving to defend.

"Already the danger signals have gone up. Already the corrosive process has begun. And every diminution of our tolerance, each new act of enforced conformity, each idle accusation, each demonstration of hysteria, each new restrictive law, is one more sign that we can lose the battle against fear.

"The Communists cannot deprive us of our liberties - fear can. The Communists cannot stamp out our faith in human dignity - fear can. Fear is an enemy within ourselves; and, if we do not root it out, it may destroy the very way of life we are so anxious to protect."

I know, of course, that there is always some risk in showing tolerance in a time of trial; in clinging to the beatitudes when there are brutes about. Our determination to stand fast for the principles that protect our freedom may, I admit, mean that one traitor may avoid exposure; one spy may escape detention.

That great American jurist, that wise benevolent man, Judge Learned Hand, gave the answer to this fear in magnificent words when he said:

"Risk for risk, for myself I had rather take my chance that some traitors will escape detection than spread abroad a spirit of general suspicion and distrust, which accepts rumour and gossip in place of undismayed and unintimidated inquiry. I believe that that community is already in process of dissolution where each man begins to eye his neighbor as a possible enemy, where non-conformity with the accepted creed, political as well as religious, is a mark of disaffection; where denunciation, without specification or backing, takes the place of evidence;

where orthodoxy chokes freedom of dissent; where faith in the eventual supremacy of reason has become so timid that we dare not enter our convictions in the open lists to win or lose."

There are some ways in which we cannot - and would not compete with Communism; in elevating fear into a civic virtue; in making denunciation the test of loyalty; in lauding hatred and violence as the badge of patriotism; in making drab conformity the test of good citizenship.

Nevertheless, in other ways we can, not only compete with Communism, but triumph over all it represents in evil and tyranny. To do this, however, and while building up ramparts against military aggression, we must stand firm in defence of those principles of tolerance and fair play, law and justice, which are the main source of fundamental freedoms, human rights and true national greatness.

There is no cause for complacency or easy optimism in the international situation today. But there is no cause, either, for hysteria or despair. We have a deep-rooted strength derived from freedom that the massed battalions of regimented slaves can never hope to possess. That strength will prevail, and, please God, it will one day bring about a peace that will be something better than an uneasy interlude between wars.

S/C