



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
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No. 51/46 CANADIAN STATEMENT AT GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Text of the statement by the Secretary of State for External Affairs and Chairman of the Canadian Delegation to the Sixth Session of the United Nations General Assembly, Mr. L.B. Pearson, made in the general debate in plenary session on November 12, 1951.

May I begin, Sir, as so many others have begun, by expressing the pleasure of my delegation at being once again in this lovely city of Paris, and in this great and hospitable country of France.

I confess that we did not support the move to transfer the Sixth Assembly from New York to Paris, but our motives for not doing so will not, I am sure, be misunderstood by our French friends. They were no reflection on the affection which we have for France, a mother country of the Canadian nation, but were dictated by considerations of that prudent economy which is itself a notable French characteristic.

This general discussion provides the opportunity for an annual stock-taking of our world organization. This year not much comfort or hope results from that process. One should not jump to the hasty conclusion that we are bankrupt, because we are not. But we are certainly losing some credit. The reply of Mr. Vishinsky on Thursday afternoon last to the statement of Mr. Acheson that morning showed in a dramatic fashion how far this wastage of assets has gone.

The United Nations remains our last, best hope for peace. But the emphasis is shifting from best to last. We will have to stop that shift if our world organization is to survive as an effective instrument to maintain peace and promote security.

On the credit side much valuable, though often unspectacular work in the social, economic and humanitarian fields has been accomplished. The struggle against hunger and privation goes on, and the United Nations is playing a gallant part in it. In our disappointment over some other aspects of United Nations work, we should not forget that fact. But even this social and humanitarian work is impeded, and often frustrated by political factors, though it should be far above such considerations. It is also held back by the fact that one great group of powers, which never cease to boast of its peaceful, humanitarian ideals, or its technical advances and social development, is making practically no contribution to that work. Indeed, the leader of those powers, the U.S.S.R., has refused to participate in the work of a single one of the technical and specialized

agencies created by the United Nations for social, economic and humanitarian purposes. That fact itself disposes, among other things, of much of the Soviet Union's familiar glorification of its desire to share its progress with others.

How, for instance, can any state boast of its belief in peaceful co-existence and friendly international co-operation, when it refuses to take any part whatever in the work of such useful, progressive bodies as the World Health Organization or the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization?

On the political side of our United Nations work there has been a great achievement. The United Nations has shown in Korea what collective action under strong leadership can do to halt aggression. This demonstration of our collective will and our collective strength has inspired and strengthened the United Nations. Those who broke the peace have been held, and driven back, and the lesson of their failure is there for all others to read who may be thinking of aggression. That, of course, is the reason why those others rail against the effectiveness of United Nations action in Korea, and try to prove it is action by American warmongers and aggressors. If you can believe that, you can believe anything; but no one believes it, except those whose opinions are pre-fabricated in Moscow.

For what has been accomplished in Korea by the United Nations, we should pay a special tribute to the United States of America which has carried so much of the burden, and which, for that reason, has been the target for so much of the abuse. No country is closer to the United States, geographically, or in any other way, than Canada. Our relations with the most powerful nation in the world are based on friendship, confidence and mutual respect; are not, as in some parts of the world, those of master and servant. We in Canada occasionally do criticize, frankly, but, I hope, only responsibly, the policies and attitudes of our friends to the south. This, I think, reinforces the value of the support which, of our own free will, we give to the United States. With the United Kingdom and France, she gives leadership to those countries which are trying to preserve the peace; uphold the principles, and fulfil the purposes of the United Nations Charter. That is what we are doing today in Korea, and thousands of Canadians, fighting there as soldiers of the United Nations, are proud to share in that high endeavour.

But the action of the United Nations in Korea had to be hastily improvised. It has not even yet a broad enough basis of participation. It has demonstrated weaknesses as well as strength in our organization. Above all, it has underlined the lesson that responsibilities must be accepted if privileges and powers are to be shared. For this reason, the report of the Collective Measures Committee, which was created at the last session of the General Assembly to study how collective action could most effectively be organized against an aggressor in the future will constitute one of the most important subjects for consideration at this session. The result of that consideration may go far to show whether our Assembly, which now has the authority, will be able to use that authority more effectively against threats to the peace than the Security Council has recently been able to do.

If a powerful group in the Assembly opposes this development, and if others stand aloof, then the United Nations may become little more than a forum for the expression of world opinion, and an instrument for the conciliation and negotiation of disputes, if any, which do not involve any major power. These are important functions. But if they are the only things we can do, then the whole character of our world organization is changed from the concept of San Francisco, and collective security on a universal basis becomes a distant dream. As it disappears, we will be forced to rely more and more, as a second best, on more limited and regional arrangements to protect the peace.

Such a possibility, I suggest, must certainly be faced. There is no point in deceiving ourselves. The United Nations has great achievements to its credit, and will have more, but the vision which once inspired such world-wide and such fervent hope has been dimmed by the dark clouds of political conflict between the great powers.

International relations are now, in a very real and dangerous sense, centred on the conflict between two great blocs, facing each other in suspicion and animosity and fear, with the chasm between them growing wider, and the efforts to bridge that chasm apparently becoming less effective. Indeed, if we took the statement of the Soviet delegate on Thursday last at face value, it would show that the Russian government has now decided to abandon the effort completely: and to use the United Nations, not for the removal of differences, but merely to vilify, sneer at and attack those with whom it disagrees. This, in turn, naturally produces a hardening on the other side until diplomatic negotiation of any kind becomes practically impossible. That is the real tragedy and the real danger of the present position.

Between these two blocs other states hover uneasily, form their own smaller groupings and pursue their own aims inside and outside the United Nations. Some of these aims are peaceful and legitimate; others have very little to do with the principles of our Charter.

Many of the states between the two blocs are what we now describe as under-developed areas. They are receiving a measure, indeed an increasing measure of technical assistance from the United Nations, and technical and economic aid from various agencies in the free world, including that from the Colombo Plan, an initiative of the Commonwealth of Nations, in which my country is proud to play a part.

If only the burden of defence programmes could be reduced, a much larger measure of such technical assistance and aid for capital development could and would flow in a far greater stream into the under-developed countries and territories.

Unhappily, the necessity forced on the free states of protecting themselves against Russian imperialism, using as its spear-head the weapons of international communism, has become now the mainspring of national policy. It has forced us into this "cold war" which now colours every subject that appears on a United Nations agenda, whether it is the election of the chairman of a sub-committee, or a

resolution on disarmament. As a result, the United Nations, instead of devoting its energy to removing the causes of war, and promoting economic and social well-being, is now used all too much as an agency for gaining strength in the conflict which now rages, and in preparing for the far worse one that may come. In our debates and discussions, some delegations, notably the Cominform delegations, adopt the strategy, and even the vocabulary of conflict, and others feel it necessary to defend themselves against these tactics. Ideas and words are distorted as in war propaganda, and lose their meaning. Peace is used merely as a slogan to divide and disarm the enemy. The victims of aggression, as in Korea, are denounced as aggressors. Dangerous courses are advocated in the name of nationalism, of freedom, of international law, order and progress. In such an atmosphere, how can our United Nations grow stronger? How, in fact, can it survive?

There was a depressing example last Thursday of the depths to which the debates of the United Nations General Assembly can now descend. The United States Secretary of State, on behalf of the Three Powers, made a serious proposal - a constructive and helpful proposal - for the regulation, limitation and balanced reduction of all forces and all armaments, and the prohibition of atomic weapons. The first essential step in this process was to set up an international agency to go into every country, including the U.S.A., and including the U.S.S.R., and secure complete information about every form of armed force and armament, including atom bombs.

What was Mr. Vishinsky's reply to this Three-Power disarmament proposal? He could hardly sleep, he said, it made him laugh so much; it was so funny. It makes one wonder whether this pathetic merriment does not conceal an uneasy conscience. When he stopped laughing, he produced a really, serious proposal of his own. Let me read you its first paragraph:-

"The General Assembly declares participation in the aggressive Atlantic bloc and the creation by certain States, and primarily by the United States, of military, naval and air bases on foreign territories, incompatible with membership of the United Nations."

It is obvious that the Soviet delegation doesn't expect to get much support for that. Even as propaganda it is not very impressive stuff. The whole world knows that the Atlantic Pact is a purely defensive arrangement, in strict accordance with Article 51 of the Charter. It will never become anything else. Mr. Eden in that great and moving speech reemphasized that fact, speaking for a country which did as much as any country to win the last war and is doing as much as any country to prevent the next one.

The U.S.S.R. proposal also calls for a general disarmament conference, beginning not later than June 1, 1952. Why wait until June? What is this Assembly? It is itself a disarmament conference with a concrete proposal now before it; one which causes Mr. Vishinsky only merriment.

Then, finally, the U.S.S.R. delegation produces again its Five-Power Peace Pact. But as Mr. Acheson said the other

day, in the United Nations Charter we have a 60-power peace pact. Why does the U.S.S.R. delegate think a new and more exclusive pact would do what the Charter does not do. Of the five governments, he damns three as aggressors, warmongers, imperialist cliques, capitalist exploiters, etc. But he would have us believe that a pact, a piece of paper, would change all that, restore confidence, produce co-operation and friendship. This kind of argument is almost an insult to our intelligence; but, of course, it is not meant for us. Once again, the United Nations Assembly is used merely as an instrument for political warfare, and debased for propaganda purposes.

I stress these depressing reflections, which the Soviet statement of last Thursday provokes, because none of us can escape the responsibility of assessing the attitudes and motivations of the Soviet government as realistically as possible, however grim the conclusions resulting from that assessment may be. Though our policies must be based on a sober weighing of facts - however unpalatable. But I for one am not prepared to abandon all hope of negotiations within the United Nations to save the present tension. The Three Powers have made a serious proposal that we should begin discussions here and now for the reduction of armaments. We in our delegation support this proposal. We know, however, that one determining factor must be the attitude of the U.S.S.R. and so I hope that this attitude, as it was stated by the Soviet delegate last Thursday, will be reconsidered, so that when we sit down in the Political Committee to examine this question, the Soviet delegation may be able to help us realize, rather than to laugh at, the deepest hopes of mankind.

That would involve, among other things, a readiness by the Soviet - and every other delegation - to discuss facts, rather than to pursue the tactics of propaganda. Nothing, I'm afraid, that we have heard from the Soviet delegation so far gives us much hope on this score.

For example, when Mr. Acheson reminded us of brutal violations of human rights and dignity from which thousands in Hungary and other Cominform countries have suffered in recent months. Mr. Vishinsky could do no better than to retaliate with a report of two negroes shot in Florida. If that report is accurate, a shocking crime has been committed. The important fact is, however, that 99.9% of the people of the United States will feel that way about it. Thousands will protest about it, and try to do something about it. When 10,000 innocent Hungarians are dragged from their homes and driven like animals to the horrors of a concentration camp, does anybody in Budapest dare to protest? If he so much as murmured in his sleep, he would soon join the 10,000; if, indeed, he got that far. Of course, Mr. Vishinsky says such reports are slanderous fabrications. But we are not able to believe him, because we know the facts, and facts, to use the Soviet delegate's words, are stubborn things. Similarly, when Mr. Vishinsky says that it is "common knowledge that the Soviet Union has no thought of attacking anyone", and therefore we need no armed defence against a non-existent danger, our reply is again, we are not able to believe him because the facts are against him.

Again, when he says that Soviet Russia abhors "power politics" and stands for "close international co-operation based on mutual respect and the sovereign equality of states", we simply point to the Soviet attitude toward Yugoslavia, or recall the fate of those Polish or Czech or Bulgarian communists who dared to show a trace of national loyalty or patriotism.

Because the facts - those stubborn things - are there for all to see, we have in my country a dread of the aggressive designs of Moscow and less hope, now than before, that negotiation inside the United Nations will result in action that will remove that dread. Other free peoples have been forced to come to the same conclusion. Even in the U.S.S.R. itself, because of the misrepresentation and falsification of events in other countries by a government which has absolute control over what its own people see and hear, that fear of war has now, I think, been driven deep into the minds of people there who want war as little as we do. The vicious circle of fear is now complete.

As one means of escape from this dread anxiety, my country is now forced to increase its armed strength, though there lies ahead of it, as a young country, a tremendous task of peaceful national development to which it desires to direct all its energy, all its wealth, all its resources. Instead, for the very protection of our very existence, we are now forced, by the unfriendly, aggressive policies of the Cominform states, to devote today about 45 per cent of our budget to defence.

History shows, of course, that arms alone have never been able to ensure peace. But what alternative is there, in present circumstances, to that strength from which, alone, the free world can negotiate with any chance of success with those who recognize no other test than power? No words of the kind that Mr. Vishinsky has uttered in this debate, will deflect my own country from this course, because nothing that he has said, or nothing his government has done, has lessened the burden of our fear.

Without military strength, then, we feel that we would be lost. But now our strength is increasing and this is giving greater confidence to our peoples. It should also - and I hope we never forget this - give us renewed determination to use that strength solely for defensive purposes and without provocation; use it as a basis for the negotiation and settlement of differences, whenever possible within the United Nations. It is essential that when a genuine move towards peace and the easing of international tensions is made, we should, as members of the United Nations, meet it half-way, or even more than half-way. But glib words about "peaceful co-existence" are not enough. Hitler promised that to those whom he wished to conquer, if they would only wear a brown shirt and become his slaves.

It is always easy to secure peace and a kind of security on the other man's terms. But we know where that can lead - to the humiliation of a Chamberlain or the death of a Masaryk.

The only peaceful co-existence which we can accept, and which we must never cease to search for, is one in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

If we can reach that objective, the tragic split between the Great Powers which now weakens and endangers our world organization could be healed; the United Nations could grow in strength and prestige to a point where many of the items on this Assembly's agenda would be unthinkable. If, however, that split persists and grows deeper and more dangerous, then the United Nations, as we know it now, as we formed it in San Francisco, may disappear. With that disappearance, if it ever took place, the risk of a war in which everything worth having would also disappear, would become immeasurably greater. To the prevention of that final catastrophe, my delegation hopes that this Assembly will be able to make an effective contribution. To that end, we pledge our own best effort.

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