



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN INTERNATIONAL
AFFAIRS

Excerpts from an address by Rt. Hon. Louis S. St-Laurent, Prime Minister of Canada, Toronto, November 15, 1956.

... Independent nationhood bears with it the responsibility of making our own decisions in international affairs. That was the course on which we had embarked from the time of the Statute of Westminster and it was clear for all to see that we had reached that goal by September 10, 1939 when we advised His Majesty to declare war on behalf of Canada against the Germany of Hitler.

Because of the very high degree of unity of public opinion within Canada on our role in world affairs during the last decade it has been possible for us to make constructive and enlightened contributions to the maintenance of international peace and security. In saying this, I would remind you that it is axiomatic that a country -- and this applies with particular force to one such as Canada with her multi-cultural population and varied economic regions -- cannot successfully implement its national policies unless its people are united in their purpose.

While there has naturally been some discussion of the effectiveness of some of our policies, there has, I think, been pretty general acceptance of the goals of those policies as being in keeping with the fundamental principles, of which I spoke here in Toronto in January, 1947, of maintaining our national unity, our concept of political liberty, the supremacy of the rule of law, the recognition of the importance of human values and a willingness to accept international responsibilities within the bounds of our capabilities.

Nearly ten years ago, I said that Canadians had accepted the necessity of making decisions on major questions affecting the peace and security of the world, that many questions would arise from situations having their origins far from our shores and that, at first glance, these might not appear to affect directly the interests of the Canadian people. I went on to say that in so far as such geographically distant events were factors in world security, they were of first importance to the future of our country.

The Middle East

I do not believe that there is a single thinking citizen of Canada who would say that the situation in the Middle East today is not one which has serious implications for the peace of the world and thus for our own security.

It is my view that, had fighting between Israel and Egypt on the one hand and the military intervention of the United Kingdom and France on the other continued for a prolonged period of time, there would have been a very grave danger of the conflict spreading and of an almost irreparable breach being created between the nations of Asia and Africa and those of much of the western world in their relations with one another and in the United Nations. In addition, a great strain would have been placed on the continued existence of the Commonwealth as we know it today. Further, it is conceivable that the practical cohesion of our Western Alliance would have been most seriously affected.

For Canada, such a dread three-sided eventuality would have presented a very grave situation; for the world, in our eyes, it would have been a tragedy; for the Soviet Union it would have provided a situation with endless possibilities to exploit in the furtherance of its unrenounced aim to make the world over in its own image.

Well, you know what we did. In the sphere of direct action, we took steps to halt for an indefinite period all shipments of arms and material to the Middle East. We also warned all Canadians in the area of the desirability of leaving forthwith and, with the generous co-operation of our American friends, we made available to those in need of it, safe means of transportation away from the troubled zone.

At the United Nations we voted for consideration of the Israeli attack at the Special Session of the General Assembly; we initiated the resolution to put effective action behind the United Nations' call for a cease fire, by all the parties in the

conflict, through the establishment of a special United Nations' force large enough to secure and supervise the response to that call. This move of ours, which was predicated on the need to do something quickly which would be immediately both feasible and constructive, had, I know, a considerable influence on the decision of the United Kingdom and France to agree to a cease fire and to undertake to withdraw their forces from the scene of battle. And at the United Nations we are actively concerning ourselves with the need to take advantage of this cease fire and to set in motion procedures by which the absolutely essential political settlement of the Palestine question can be accomplished.

Units of the Canadian contribution to the United Nations' force are ready and the Order-in-Council placing them on active service under U.N. command will be passed and Parliament summoned as soon as we can ascertain from that great Canadian, General Burns, who has been chosen to command this emergency force, what elements he needs and cannot get from other contributors.

This is the fifth time that Canadians individually or collectively as a nation have been called upon to take to the field since the last war in an active manner in the pursuit of the task of maintaining the peace in troubled spots. Canadians have been or are still serving in firstly, the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan; secondly, the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization in Palestine; thirdly, the United Nations Command in Korea; fourthly, the International Supervisory Commission in Indo-China and now the fifth occasion is the International Emergency Force in the Middle East. If there is a lesson, as indeed I think there is, to be drawn from these commitments, which have particularly in one instance resulted in great loss to ourselves in blood and treasure, it is that we, as an adult nation, have not only been willing to make but, even more important, have also generally become recognized as capable of making, a valuable contribution to the cause of peace and moderation in the world community. It would not, I believe, be going too far to suggest that this has been the outcome of the conscious observance of those fundamental principles about which I was just speaking.

The force which we have offered to contribute in the present crisis is not primarily a fighting force but a police force. As such it is not expected to operate as a military force in armed combat against the forces of some other state. Its duty is to secure and supervise the cessation of hostilities involving Israel, Egypt, the United Kingdom and France, not to attempt by feat of arms to force the withdrawal of the armed forces of those countries. It is of a temporary nature, the

length of its assignment will be determined by the needs arising out of the present situation. It is not intended to influence the military balance in the present conflict and thereby the political balance affecting efforts to settle that conflict. It is limited in its operations to the extent that consent of the parties concerned is required under generally recognized international law; the force cannot be stationed, nor can it operate, on the territory of a given country without the consent of the government of that country. In short, the Emergency International United Nations Force, now more properly called "United Nations Emergency Force", is more than an observer corps but it is in no way to be a military force temporarily controlling the territory in which it will be stationed.

I am confident that Canadians in all walks of life will agree that the initiative of the Canadian Delegation in the establishment of the United Nations Emergency Force is consistent with the emphasis which we have placed on the role of the United Nations in the settlement of international disputes and reflects also the general Canadian views on how the United Nations can best implement its responsibilities in this vital field.

I have been most heartened at the reaction amongst the members of the Commonwealth to our initiative in the United Nations and deeply relieved that, through this method, the means have been found whereby we all can make an active and positive contribution to the cause of peace together with all our Allies in NATO and so many other members of the United Nations. It was for a time a sad spectacle to see, at the United Nations, the United States and many of our European Allies with the Soviet Union and its satellites on one side, and France and the United Kingdom and other of our Commonwealth partners on the other - a spectacle which we, as Canadians, hope never to see repeated.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is vital for our security and its smooth functioning, free of any even subconscious reservations on the part of its members, is essential for its continued success.

Hungary

Well, it is an ill wind that blows everyone no good. It would be idle to deny that the Middle East crisis did serve to obscure in the minds of many people around the world, and especially in nations of Asia, the enormity of the vicious Soviet intervention in Hungary during these past weeks when courageous men and women, yes, even children unaided by any outside sources were striving so hard and so heroically to throw off the yoke of tyranny which is the nature of the Soviet colonial system.

It did tend to make more difficult the mobilization of the full weight of world opinion in favour of national freedom and against foreign domination in Hungary and Poland. It is also true that such an outcry of world opinion is, short of war, the most effective form of political assistance which we can at this time provide to the valiant forces of freedom which are stirring in those parts of the Soviet empire. On the other hand, Soviet military intervention, which we know was under way before the recent events in the Middle East, has done much to preserve the essential unity of purpose of the NATO nations and that approach to unanimity among so many of the members of the United Nations, of which I spoke over a nation-wide network of television and radio stations some ten days ago.

May that approach to unanimity long endure and may we, the free peoples of the world, in the Commonwealth, in NATO and in the United Nations, all together continue to put forth our best efforts to realize the noble purposes of the United Nations Charter with continuing beneficial results for ourselves and for all mankind.

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