

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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THE CONDUCT OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
IN A DIVIDED WORLD

Text of an address by Mr. L.B. Pearson,
Secretary of State for External Affairs,
to the Rotary Club of Montreal, in the
Mount Royal Hotel, Montreal, on Tuesday,
July 19, 1949.

In the best of circumstances the conduct of foreign relations is a difficult, complicated and, often, an unrewarding process. There are over seventy nations in the world today, varying greatly in size, strength and resources; presenting a complex pattern of objectives, and methods for securing these objectives. The rule of law which ordinarily makes it possible to do business within a nation in an orderly and peaceful manner has not yet been adequately accepted or applied amongst sovereign states. We have certainly not yet succeeded in putting into operation machinery which we know will prevent violence between nations.

In spite of these difficulties, we may normally count on one advantage in the conduct of international affairs. In ordinary circumstances, a nation believes that its best interests are served when the world is at peace, and when economic and social conditions generally are stable. At the moment, however, the conduct of international relations is grievously complicated by the fact that one group of states, directed and controlled by one of the world's great powers, does not seem to believe in the principles of social stability or peaceful progress. These states, led by the U.S.S.R., have committed themselves to the reactionary and destructive principles of revolutionary communism. No matter what their leaders may occasionally say to foreign journalists for outside consumption, their own considered words and actions prove beyond doubt that it is an article of their faith that conflict between Communism and free democracy is inevitable. They, therefore do not believe that anything should be done to increase the security or the prosperity of any state which is not a communist state. On the contrary, they follow the doctrine that in the non-communist world disorder must be provoked and encouraged; that discord amongst groups in society must be fostered; that nation must be set against nation, and every co-operative effort for peace and stability must be hindered and frustrated to the fullest extent possible.

These circumstances often give a distorted and, at times, even ludicrous character to the conduct of international affairs, like the image that you see of yourself when you walk through the Hall of Mirrors at the Circus. You find that negotiations which you undertook with the object of securing agreement on some subject are being prolonged and twisted not for the purpose of reaching agreement, but for the purpose of preventing it. You find that words which you have uttered in good faith are torn out of their context and used to prove that you have intentions you never even remotely considered. You find in negotiating with the Communists at international meetings that an offer which you made as a genuine concession in some process of negotiation is quoted back to you as a proof that you didn't really believe in your case in the first place and is interpreted as a confession of hypocrisy and weakness

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on your part. You find debates on principles of international cooperation being stretched out indefinitely for no other purpose than to prevent a conclusion being reached which might help bring stability to the world, on some other basis than that of the 100% acceptance of Russian communism.

A brief parable appeared once in the "New Yorker", which illustrates admirably the kind of topsy turvy environment which is created by tactics of this nature. It has been reproduced in a book entitled "The Wild Flag", which is a selection of the writings of E.B. White. In one of these selections, a passage is quoted from the notebook of a little girl who is describing the organization and activities of a club which she and her friend have formed. Here is the excerpt:

The Club

the members of this club are Susie and Donny, we spy in this club most of the time and also we make pictures of where we want to spy. Sometimes we draw pictures and play games on the blackboard, but still we spy most of the time. We spy mostly when guests come.

Where we spy and where we hide

In the living room we hide under the piano behind the pink chair and also in our club. In the dining room we hide under the table and in the kitchen we hide under the sink in the corner. And sometimes we hide in the hall closet but we don't very much because the guests don't go there very much.

The things we do in this club

when people walk past the club we roll marbles at their feet and when someone sits in the blue chair we hit them on the head, So that is what we do in this club.

Mr. White suggests that this is a fair picture of the contemporary scene, though expressed in clearer and more graphic prose than that normally employed by governments or their representatives. "The essential structure is there," he says, "the spy system, the places to hide, the waiting for the false move on the part of the guest, the fateful blue chair, the sudden marble. There will be no peace in the household while those club members are under that piano."

One of the difficulties we meet in countering these communist tactics of delegations under the piano at international conferences is the extreme discipline which the Soviet Union is able to impose within its bloc. There are, of course, generally two points of view in the United Nations -- the communist view held by a small but aggressive minority, and the non-communist view usually held by the great majority of states. By their very nature, however, the democratic states find it difficult to impose upon themselves or upon each other the rigid discipline which the communist states achieve. There is no "automatic majority" (that is the phrase the Communists use), amongst the democratic states. The Communists know this very well. Often, at the very moment when they are denouncing this "automatic majority", they are also doing their best

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to split the western vote, which they could not do unless that vote were free. They are fully aware of the fact that a policy put forward by a Western state in the United Nations secures support from other democratic delegations only if that policy is able to carry the conviction of those delegations. I can assure you, for instance, that at these meetings Canada is not the subservient satellite of any power, however friendly. On the other hand, the Communists have long since given up the pretence that any such democratic process exists amongst the states which vote with the communist bloc. At the last session of the General Assembly, for example, the representative of one of the Soviet satellite states, in the course of a meeting made a proposal which he thought would strengthen the communist position. To his surprise and, no doubt, chagrin he found that his motion was attacked by the representative of the Soviet Union. Therefore, when his own resolution was put to the vote, he voted against it, quite shamelessly abandoning his position for no other reason than that it displeased the representative of the U.S.S.R. On another occasion the representative of a small communist-controlled state voted, no doubt by error, with the Western members of the United Nations. The Soviet member of the Committee intervened, corrected the vote, and even insisted that the record be changed. I hesitate to think what would happen if the British or American member of a U.N. Committee tried in this, or in any other way to give orders to a Canadian delegate.

The majorities which the democratic nations have always maintained on matters of importance in the United Nations have not depended, of course, on humiliating procedures and devices of this nature. These tactics do, however, create a problem for us, because we are endeavouring to build an international organization on democratic principles in company with a small and disciplined minority, who do not believe in these principles and who do not have the least hesitation in bringing discredit and disorder to that organization if it suits their purpose to do so.

This minority of states also endeavours to keep the international situation confused and uncertain by using the Communist parties in the Western democracies to attack the foreign policies of their own governments when those policies run counter to the desires of Moscow. The Communist party in Canada is extremely small and we may be tempted to feel that it is not able to do very much harm in this country or to weaken our position abroad. Let us never forget, however, that it gets support from and acts on orders from, the centre of communist international authority in Moscow. That is its strength and our danger.

A former secretary of the Communist party in Canada has recently been convicted in the Canadian courts of acting as an agent for the Soviet Government in Canada. Unabashed by this revelation of their enslavement to a foreign authority, our local communists continue to attach a foreign policy based on collective security under the Atlantic Pact, to which an overwhelming majority of Canadians have given their support. But what is more important, they attack it on lines which have been laid down in Moscow, and they do their best to embarrass their own Government and their own country by repeating the malicious and unfounded charges levelled against us by a foreign power. In pursuing these tactics they do not observe any of the normal restraints or decencies which are generally accepted in free society; or any of the rules by which we conduct our daily life together. Here as elsewhere, they will descend to any length of deceit, misrepresentation and vituperation in attacking those with whom they are not in agreement. It is time that we realized fully that in our community activities, in our labour unions, in our professional and occupational groups, even in our welfare organizations,

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the views and practices of the Communists in our midst, our Moscow Canadians, are directed from outside; also that they are conducted with an inflexible determination, a ceaseless energy and a single minded devotion that the rest of us seldom show in discharging our social and political and economic obligations. Their strength rests on our indifference.

In the presence of these disruptive domestic influences, we must constantly ask ourselves what we shall do to minimize them and protect ourselves. The first answer to that question, I am sure, is that we should not be led into hasty or ill-considered action, either at home or abroad. The communists gain part of the victory if they mislead us into thinking that we must always take short cuts in dealing with them, for by so doing we may ourselves weaken the very political institutions which they are seeking to destroy. In endeavouring to destroy the influence of communism, therefore, we must be careful not to throw the baby out with the bath water.

We have always hesitated in this country, sensibly, I think, to make it unlawful either to hold political ideas or to establish organizations to express these ideas. We have reserved the penalties of the criminal code for those who by some overt act have threatened the peace and security of the country. I think that this particular democratic tradition is wise in both principle and practice. Once we make it a crime to hold political ideas merely because they are thought to be dangerous, it will then be but a short step to suppressing political ideas because they are not liked. And from a practical point of view, it always seems to me that there is much to be said for having people like the communists organizing in the light so that the public may know who they are and what they are doing, rather than to have them hidden underground. I agree, nevertheless, that the danger from international communism is presently such that we have to keep examining and re-examining ways of meeting that danger.

We are meeting it on the international level by arranging for collective action against an aggressor; by combining national forces and pooling national resources. We must meet it on the domestic level by strengthening, if necessary, our criminal code against actions which threaten the security of the state; but, even more, by keeping our democratic society so healthy and strong that the germs of communism cannot breed in it.

I would repeat, however, that we must never ignore the effect of any action which we take against communism on those principles of liberty and law, which Canadians have cherished and which are the source of our stability and our strength. Political freedom must mean the freedom of the man you don't like to say the things you don't believe; if it is anything less than this, it is not true freedom. The test, to justify repressive action by government, must always be whether the safety and good order of the State is in immediate danger. This is a test which must be constantly and conscientiously applied in order to determine the point at which further measures against communism or communists need be taken.

We can act against communism with far greater assurance of success if we work as hard to make our free democracy function successfully as the Communists do to destroy it; and if we use our own machinery of government for the purpose of removing the causes of distress and unrest within our own local and national communities. We have our economic and social problems. There are injustices and wrongs in our society. We know, however, that if

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we are to remain free we must solve those problems and correct those wrongs, without destroying the basis of our freedom. We don't want either the liberty of the jungle or the security of the jail. Fascism is one, and communism is the other.

A distinguished English journalist, Edward Crankshaw, in a recent book entitled "Russia and the Russians", which I am sure you will find is an objective and even sympathetic effort to understand the Russians and their system of government, portrays life under communism in the following terms:

"Violence, arbitrary law, sustained privation and undernourishment, blind, trampling stupidity, the uttermost harshness of rule over body and soul impartially, bodily slavery with no compensating freedom for the spirit, forced atrophy of the independent mind without bread and circuses to fill the gap, physical drabness and squalor over all, reflecting perfectly a mood of hopeless apathy".

In the field of international affairs, it seems to me also that confidence in our own methods, our own institutions and in our plans for collective security are a primary source of strength. I do not think that in the long run if we stick to our convictions, and act on our belief we really have much to fear in the contemporary world. One of the greatest successes of Soviet propaganda since the war has been to spread abroad the idea that the world is divided into two parts of relatively equal strength and power. Far too many people have been willing to think that there are the Russians and their satellites on the one side, and all the rest of us on the other, and that these two opposing political forces are approximately equal in strength. If, however, we assess the real strength of these two parts of the world, we cannot help coming to the conclusion that this assumption is quite fantastic. We can make one computation on a purely physical basis and come to that result. Better still, however, we can take into account the total strength of our two communities, in terms not only of physical resources, but of training, experience, technical skill, ingenuity, the ability of the public to understand and support -- yes, and to criticize the policies of their governments, the freedom of scholars to push out new frontiers of knowledge -- all the incalculable elements which go together to make up the physical force and moral strength of any community.

Furthermore, there are plans now being put into operation which will increase the strength and stability of the Western World and which will, if carried out with determination and imagination, make a great contribution towards peace and progress. They are embodied in the United Nations, in the Marshall Plan, in the Brussels Treaty, in the Atlantic Pact, and in various other instruments of international co-operation. They are already producing results, and will continue to do so, though there are dangers ahead. One, and a very important one, is the danger of allowing short-range political considerations to obscure the desirability of making at times what may seem to be immediate concessions in return for ultimate advantages.

Another danger is that we should allow either communist threats or communist olive branches to divert us from the line which the democracies are now following with such success. The danger has been extremely well defined in an article which appeared recently in The London Economist, which I should like to quote:

"The western powers are engaged at the moment on an arduous and in many ways perilous task. They are building for the first time in their joint histories a regional structure of security, political unity and economic co-operation.

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Its pillars are the Atlantic Pact, the Council for Europe and the various agencies of the "Marshall Plan". Almost every move in this effort of construction is new. Every fresh development demands a concentration of energy and purpose which it is difficult for democracies with their lax methods and easy-going traditions to sustain. Meanwhile, the Russians, who choose to see in the Atlantic world's regional effort a menace to the regionalization of Eastern Europe they carried through at break-neck speed after the war, are now bent on using every device of propaganda and pressure to prevent the completion of the structure. As the western powers toil painfully up and down the scaffolding, the Russians and their satellites stand on the other side of the fence, jumping up and down, whistling, chanting slogans, flinging a few stones and every now and then, advancing to the foot of the ladder to ask whether the weary builders will not come down for a nice cup of tea and a chat. It is all rather disturbing and at times tempting. But the western builders have only one duty -- which is to get the roof on to their building. Until they have accomplished so much, attention to what the Russians are doing is not only useless, it is a dangerous waste of time".

The way ahead is not easy, and it will require all the wisdom, strength, ingenuity and patience of which our democratic system is capable to overcome the difficulties that we shall encounter. But we have taken the measure of communism, both at home and abroad, we have discerned its purposes and revealed its methods, we have undertaken to meet its challenge. We will be successful in that undertaking if, but only if, we of the free democracies, in our domestic and in our international policies, act with unity of purpose, with imagination and with courage.

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