



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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CANADA AND THE KOREAN SITUATION

An address by Mr. L. B. Pearson, Secretary of State for External Affairs, before a joint meeting of The Engineering Institute of Canada and The American Society of Civil Engineers in Toronto, on July 14, 1950.

The engineering profession is one which must arouse envy in the minds of those of us who are engaged in more abstract activities. You engineers know where you stand in respect of any particular problem. You know the materials with which you have to deal and how they will act. You know the precise allowances and adjustments that have to be made and, as a result, you can, in normal circumstances, count on the result being achieved which you have planned. Yours is an exact science. It is very different from work in the political or social sciences where forces are fluid and materials elastic; where circumstances are continually changing and, therefore, conclusions from them have to be changed; where you can never be sure that you will end up even approximately near the goal that you set when you began your planning. Nowhere is this more apparent than in international affairs, and it accounts to some extent for the frustrations and disappointments and failures which we who work in this field have to face so often. It is, however, with these international matters, difficult and even dangerous as it is to talk about them with any assurance or finality, that I wish to deal tonight; more particularly developments arising out of the aggression committed a fortnight or so ago on the Republic of Korea.

I confess that on this occasion I had hoped to talk about a subject which would be more closely related to your profession - that of the developing and expanding international programmes of technical assistance to undeveloped areas - a problem which is an engineering one as well as a political one; whose solution by international action can mean so much for peace and well-being, by putting the less developed countries on the road to a better standard of living and by showing them how to help themselves along that road.

At the moment, however, the subject of Korea and the threat it involves to peace, is in all our minds, and I think that you would expect me to say something about it.

There is no doubt that the Korean situation does involve a serious threat to general peace, but not in the sense that the Communists and their dupes in Canada and in other countries mean. Since United Nations intervention in Korea to stop aggression, a planned, purposeful campaign of deception has been launched by the Communists - under Cominform direction - using as their agency the spurious "peace movements" which they have organized and fostered in various countries. The object of this campaign - which is being conducted with skill, vigour and complete lack of scruple - is to convince people that intervention in Korea is a blow at peace and that our motto should therefore be, "Hands Off Korea". It is a sad commentary on human gullibility that the aggressive imperial policy of a great Slav despotism should be able to harness to its own political aims the highest and noblest sentiment in man - the love of peace and the desire to secure it. Believe me, there is no genuine peace ideal in these Communist "peace" campaigns. If there were, all Canadians and Americans - indeed all free men - would back them to the limit. The fact is that the word "peace" has been debased and is being utilized by the Communists for their own belligerent purposes. This so-called "dove" - Mr. Dean Acheson has called it a Trojan dove - which has been

loosed from a Communist ark and in which dwell 170 divisions of soldiers, bears in its beak, not the emblem of peace, but poison ivy! I hope we will send this particular bird back to the Kremlin ark from which it came where it can report to its keepers that we are not so foolish after all!

This Communist peace campaign, though many of its supporters do not realize it, is simply another weapon of war against free democratic society - as much a weapon of war as are the communist armies, so vastly greater than those of the free world. There is no better proof of this than the Communist reaction to events in Korea, and to the participation of the United Nations in those events. Let us look at the facts and cut through the lies of Red propaganda.

By June 24th, 1950, every man, woman and child in North Korea had signed, or at least made his thumbprint on, a peace declaration. Yet during the very time that these declarations were being collected and forwarded to the Communist "peace headquarters" in Paris, preparations in North Korea were being furiously accelerated for the launching of a naked and cynical armed aggression on the Republic of Korea. These preparations must have been going on for weeks, and were designed for only one purpose - offensive war. And so on June 25th, this attack was launched, almost before the ink on these North Korean "peace" declarations was dry. When the Communists now tell us "to fight for peace", they mean to make it possible for this Communist aggression to succeed; just as they have told us that it would be their duty, if war ever broke out with Russia, to fight for peace by stabbing their own countries in the back. There is no peace in this campaign, but there is much danger to peace in it!

It has, of course, been stated officially in Moscow, and echoed by obedient Communist parties throughout the world, that war broke out in Korea as a result of an attack by South Koreans on North Koreans. The transparent nonsense of this lie should be obvious even to Communists themselves. Even Goebbels would be ashamed of it and he was certainly a master of the big lie. The South Korean forces were armed with machine guns and rifles and light artillery. They were in no position to commit, with any possibility of success, any aggression, even if they had desired to do so. Furthermore, the fact that they were caught so completely unprepared that they could not put up any effective initial defence; that they were the victims of amphibious operations on the coast; that great tanks at once started rumbling down their roads into the south, showed that this aggression had been carefully worked out over the weeks against the unsuspecting South Koreans. The evidence on this matter is so conclusive that it does not need to be repeated in detail. It is made all the more convincing because it has come from a United Nations Commission on the spot, which includes representatives of countries who could not by any stretch of the imagination, be called satellites of Washington. These United Nations Commissioners, and not Moscow, have told the truth about Korea. It was on the basis of the facts revealed by them that the Security Council took the quick and decisive action that it did.

It is tragic that this action had to be taken by the Security Council, because it does mean armed police action which, in its turn - as we know already - means death and destruction. It would have been even more tragic, however, if the United Nations had defaulted on its clear-cut obligations to come to the defence of an attacked people, especially when quick and strong leadership was given in this undertaking by a great power which had forces in the area that could be made available to the United Nations for the restoration of peace. If the United Nations had failed at this time, the consequences would have been grave, not only for our world organization, but for peace itself. We would have once again repeated the performance of Abyssinia and Munich. In all the grim anxieties of the present situation, there is a gleam - more than a gleam - there is a promise of hope for the future in the fact that this time the collective conscience of the democratic world has expressed itself in action and not merely in words. The United Nations has intervened quickly and effectively, and collective security has been shown to mean something. The lesson of this can be read in other quarters where it perhaps needs to be read. If it is understood, we will have indeed struck a blow for peace.

If only we could get across to those people whose governments have cut themselves off from the international community, that peace is all we have in mind; that there is no other purpose in this United Nations intervention but to stop aggression in Korea; and that no one, least of all the leader in this collective action, the United States, desires for one moment to exploit or extend this conflict, or to indulge in any action beyond that which is required to carry out the specific and restorative purposes of the Security Council resolution. That resolution has now received the approval of 53 states. They include many countries, and Canada is one of them, who resent and repudiate the charge that in doing our duty to the international community, and to peace, we are merely following the orders of a single member of the United Nations which has particular interests to safeguard in Korea. This is not the case. The people of Canada know that it is not the case. The Communists, of course, in language of crude and vicious ferocity, charge that the United Nations is merely being used as the cloak for imperialist aggression, and that, in any event, its action is illegal because the U.S.S.R did not vote for the resolution decreeing it.

It is true that resolutions of the Security Council, of the kind passed on Korea, require the approval of seven members, including the votes of the permanent members of the Council. But it is equally true, though the Russians and their Friends, of course, do not mention this now, that it has become a well established rule under the Charter that absence from the Council, or even abstention on a vote when present, cannot be considered as the application of the veto. The Soviet representative on the Security Council has himself abstained from voting on a number of occasions, and on no single one of these instances has the Soviet Union challenged the legality of the action taken by the Council. Indeed, on the contrary, the Soviet representative, Mr. Gromyko himself, has explicitly stated in the past that his abstention was not to be considered as a veto. Only now in the case of Korea is this legal technicality dragged out, dusted off and used in an attempt to block action for peace. If the Soviet Union had disapproved of the action of the Council in this matter, it could have attended the Security Council, expressed its views, and voted accordingly. It has refused to do so, having arrogantly walked out from the Council when the Chinese Communist government, which was supported by it, was not able to secure recognition by a majority of the members of the Council. No doubt the U.S.S.R. thought that it may have been possible to blackmail the Council in this way to recognition. I am not at this time arguing the merits of recognition or non-recognition of Communist China. There is a great deal to be said for having the government of China, which is at present in control of the continent of China, speak for China in the United Nations, but the free people of the world are not to be brow-beaten into a decision on this point by the tyrannical exercise of this kind of pressure.

And what is Canada's position in all this? It is, I suggest, dictated by the necessity of supporting United Nations action. That is our only obligation, but it is one which we are discharging from considerations, both of national honour and of national safety. We have accepted that obligation as a Government, as a Parliament, and as a people, and we are discharging it. On this matter, we were united in the House of Commons and, I think, we are united, apart from the Communists, in the country. There may be, of course, a few who will argue that no Canadian interest is involved in Korea; that Korea is a country far away of which Canadians know nothing. There could be no reasoning more false than this. The terrible events of the last twenty years have shown us that there is no country far away from Canada and that there is no Canadian interest which matches our interest in peace. If that interest in peace is risked in Korea, or any other place, it becomes a matter of immediate concern to the Canadian people; for Canada, in this jet-propelled, atomic, inter-dependent age, cannot by itself remain secure and at peace in a warring world. And so it is a matter of primary Canadian interest, as it is the interest of all free and peaceful peoples, that the collective police action of the United Nations should succeed.

There are others who feel that we should, at once, mobilize all our strength for war and begin moving all our forces to the Pacific area. That, in my opinion, would be a very unwise thing to do in the present situation. Indeed, it is one that might give some satisfaction to those who would like to trouble the waters elsewhere so that they could fish in them.

The Korean war may be a full tragedy itself; or it may be only the first act of a longer and far greater tragedy. Therefore, while we should be resolute in facing it, we should also be cool and far-sighted. At the moment, three modern Canadian war ships are on their way to become part of United Nations naval forces off Korea. We have been assured that they will provide effective assistance and they will soon be on the spot for that purpose, flying the flag of the United Nations alongside the flag of Canada. This is no mere token assistance. Nor is it assistance to any one State. It is a contribution to the United Nations for the restoration of peace in Korea. Our participation in this operation is for that purpose alone. But it is a high purpose. In this present contribution to its fulfillment, our sailors will find themselves under the operational leadership of a great American, General MacArthur, whose men, the men of the United States, are now bearing the burden and the heat of the conflict, with the courage and determination which one would expect of them. When we think of the trials that they are now so heroically enduring, and the odds which - as forces accumulate - they are at the moment facing, a Canadian mind goes back to the desperate hours of Ypres in 1915; as an Australian would go back to Gallipoli and an Englishman to 1940.

During the last few days, through the Canadian Representative in Tokyo, Mr. E.H. Norman, we have been in touch with General MacArthur regarding Canadian naval assistance. General MacArthur is no stranger to us in Canada. His magnificent record in the Pacific area during and since the Second World War is a matter of common knowledge and universal admiration, but his common service with Canadians in time of war dates back even further to the First World War. The General warmly welcomed this Canadian addition to United Nations forces under his command, and spoke in appreciative terms of the prompt and practical expression of assistance which Canada had made. I do not need to say how genuinely we reciprocate General MacArthur's feelings at this time, nor with what confidence we look forward to his conduct of the United Nations operation to restore peace and security in Korea.

What of the future? He would indeed be rash who tried to predict it. A fire is raging and we don't know where the wind will blow it. But we know that we have reached the testing time - that we are facing trial by ordeal in the struggle between democratic freedom and Communist imperialism that has been going on for many years. We have learned - or if we have not, we have been blind to all reality - that in this struggle against such ruthless forces, there is no safety in appeasement, as there is no sense in provocation. A steady and determined front against aggression, or threats of aggression, and the means to make that steadiness and determination effective, are what is required. This means rejecting alluring advice to isolate ourselves behind our boundaries and hope for the best; repelling the panicky counsels of impatient and bellicose men; welcoming any genuine move that may seem to promise peace but spurning phony overtures and appeals which conceal a bitter desire to weaken us so we can be destroyed.

May I close by a quotation which is not, possibly, inappropriate in the circumstances. Some years ago, a man who has left his imprint, his deep and dreadful imprint, on the world's history said:

"The Russian bear is certainly capable of anything - as long as he knows the other animals he has to deal with are capable of nothing."

Who said that? Some Red-baiter? No. Karl Marx.