

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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Excerpts from an address by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. L.B. Pearson, to the Women's Canadian Club, Vancouver, B.C., August 25, 1955.

The general improvement in the international situation - at least so far as tactics and attitudes are concerned and which was most strikingly illustrated at the Geneva conference - is seen also in the Far East.

In that part of the world we have had cause to fear the threatening and bellicose words and actions of the Communist Government in Peking. It would certainly be unrealistic and premature to say that this government has abandoned all aggressive plans and intentions. We can say, however and with evidence to support it, that their behaviour now is less aggressive, less threatening than it has been. There is less talk, for instance, about attacking Formosa, and more about peaceful solutions; insistence on the fact that the dispute over that island and Quemoy and Matsu is a purely Chinese matter which is capable of settlement by discussion between the two Chinese Governments. Indeed, on July 3 Chou en-Lai formally proposed such discussions with the Government of Chiang Kai Shek.

While we should not read too much into this improvement or draw overly-optimistic conclusions from it, we would also be unwise to ignore it; or to get into the position where we seem to be demanding positive proof of utter purity from this or any other regime before we could consider giving it formal diplomatic recognition.

We recognize, after all, the Bulgarian Communist Government and its armed forces - or some of them - have been behaving like barbarians.

It is also important in considering this matter, not to confuse any form of recognition with approval of the government or regime we recognize. If and when we take a step of this kind, it would be in our own national interest - not that of Peking - and for our own national advantage. Our attitude towards communism as a system of government would remain unchanged.

We should also remember that in present circumstances and in all important negotiations concerning the situation in the Far East we have already recognized that the Government, which is now apparently firmly in control in Peking and all of continental China, has to be present and participate if any agreed solutions are to be reached.

This just happens to be the fact of the matter. It was recognized as such when the Chinese representatives from Peking - including the Foreign Minister - attended the Geneva conference last year on Korea and Indochina. It was recognized as such when Peking and American Ambassadors began to meet at Geneva a few weeks ago in formal bilateral talks.

Furthermore, it is becoming clearer that if the U.N. is to play the part that it should in the solution of certain Far Eastern problems, the de facto government of China has to be present in its discussion of these problems. If it is not, then the political conferences and negotiations concerning them will often have to be held outside the United Nations -- which is unfortunate.

It is unrealistic to expect the Red Chinese government to accept invitations to attend - as a non-member observer or participant - special U.N. conferences or discussions on Far Eastern problems when China is represented in the world organization by Chiang Kai Shek representatives.

This means that when the Secretary-General wishes to talk about release of prisoners he has to do it in Peking - rather than in New York.

This is another hard fact.

I mention these matters not to indicate that we are rushing into - or should rush into - any change of policy in this matter of diplomatic recognition, in a way that would cause bitter controversy at home and with certain friendly nations. I am suggesting, however, that the time is coming and soon - when we should have another and searching look at the problem; that we should consider it also with those friendly governments with whom we like to act - and whenever possible should act together on matters of international importance. The greatest possible unity of the free world is always a major objective of Canadian policy.

In any event, I think that it is both unwise and unnecessary to declare - as has been suggested - that we will never recognize the present communist - or indeed any communist government in Peking.

In diplomacy - as indeed in some other human activities - you should "never" say "never" or, at least, hardly ever!

The hopeful developments in the last year of relations with Moscow are proof positive of the unreality and unwisdom of basing a policy on irrevocable hostility; of allowing your diplomacy to become frozen in fear and stagnation. Change does take place - though we should always be careful not to misinterpret its meaning. As we know there have recently been smiles at Geneva, picnics outside Moscow, Russians exchanging friendly words with Americans amidst the tall corn of Iowa, atomic information exchanged between American and Russian on the shores of Lac Lemane, and various other friendly activities all of which would, a few short years ago in the U.S.A., have involved at least the threat of investigation, and certainly actual accusation of appeasement or worse against some of those Americans who had taken part in them.

So in the months ahead, which will be full of activity and manoeuvre on the diplomatic front, we will need, more than ever, to maintain a sense of balance and proportion; both realism and imagination, patience and steadiness. Especially will these qualities be required as we face the new problems and the new opportunities posed by the emerging East.

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