

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 54/32

STATEMENT AT GENEVA

Statement by the Acting Head of the Canadian Delegation, Mr. C.A. Ronning, made at Geneva, June 11, 1954, at the conference on Korea and Indo-China.

I should like to begin by referring to a subject which we consider very important. That is the challenge which has been made by all the representatives of Communist states at this conference to the position of the United Nations. These representatives have denied repeatedly, and even more categorically than they have done since 1950, the legality and the moral right of United Nations intervention in Korea and indeed of all the efforts made by the United Nations to bring peace, prosperity and unity to the Korean people. These are allegations which we must deny bluntly and unequivocally, with no less conviction because our rejection is not couched in the extreme terms in which the charges were made. I mention this subject here so that there can be no mistake about the views consistently held by the Canadian delegation. The majority of us at this conference are here because we voluntarily took part in the defence of the Republic of Korea at the request of the United Nations against palpable and inexcusable aggression. This action was taken in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and sanctioned by the vast majority of the members of that organization. I do not wish at this point to go into the formal and constitutional justification of our position, as this has already been stated on many occasions. It is hardly necessary to do so, in fact, because the absurdity of the pretension that our actions were illegal is clear to all who are free to judge the case on its merits.

A clear attempt has been made by Communist speakers to detach many of us from our devotion to the principles of the United Nations and from our belief in our own mission in Korea by referring constantly to this mission as if it were an action entirely undertaken by the United States. The United States, to its enduring credit, has undertaken by far the greatest obligations in Korea, but we other countries which have of necessity made smaller contributions are no less firmly convinced of the rightness of our mission than is the United States. Because we are a free coalition, we sometimes disagree honestly and publicly about the details of the conduct of our joint enterprise, but there should be no illusion among Communist delegations that they can, therefore, drive us apart on matters of fundamental principle in which we all believe so strongly.

The attempt has been made by Communist delegations to support their charges against the United Nations by arguing that the "United States", as they put it, cannot seek to

impose at this conference what it was unable to achieve by force of arms. This sordid interpretation of United Nations action and United Nations intentions is a distortion of the truth. The United Nations has not sought by force of arms to impose its will upon any country. It set out at the request of the Republic of Korea to defend the Republic of Korea from aggression, and this it was happily successful in doing. Having repelled aggression, the United Nations has resumed the effort, which it had accepted many years before 1950, to seek the unification of the two parts into which the country had been divided. It is not a question of the United Nations seeking to impose a settlement on either part of Korea but, in accordance with its practice in all disputes which have come before it, to seek by methods of conciliation to bring about a just and practical solution which will be accepted by the parties concerned.

The presence of Canadian troops in Korea and the presence of a Canadian delegation at Geneva attest Canada's unqualified support of the United Nations as the pre-eminent international agency for making and keeping peace; we have supported every step taken by the United Nations in its efforts to bring about the unification of Korea and we firmly believe that any agreement that is worked out to achieve this objective must be in accordance with the principles of the United Nations. If the Geneva conference is not able at this stage to reach an agreement on procedures for the establishment of a united and independent and democratic Korea, the Canadian Government is confident that the United Nations will continue to seek the attainment of this objective by peaceful means and that Canada will continue to support these efforts.

I should like now to consider the resolution which has been proposed by the representative of the Soviet Union. This resolution cannot, of course, be considered apart from the explanation which Mr. Molotov has given, and I shall direct my attention particularly, therefore, to the points in the resolution as defined in the body of Mr. Molotov's presentation.

In the first place, Mr. Molotov spoke of free elections. Mr. Molotov has spoken about free elections guaranteed by a secret ballot and universal suffrage; he has, we are happy to note, repeated the North Korean representative's previous assurance that the elections to an all-Korean legislature would be based on the principle of proportional representation. This is all to the good, and we would like very much to announce mutual agreement on this point. Unfortunately, however, we must ask ourselves whether the Communists and we, ourselves, do mean the same thing when we talk of free elections. Secret ballot, universal suffrage, proportional representation are essential to free elections, but they are by no means the whole story. While these three principles may be observed in elections in Communist countries, we consider elections are not free unless the voter is offered freedom of choice. We believe that in the elections in the Republic of Korea the voter has had greater freedom to exercise democratic rights of choice between different parties, principles and proposals than one would have expected in a country so recently free from long years of foreign domination. There can be no question in anyone's mind, however, that the voter in North Korea has no such freedom. A situation in which voters in North Korea could feel themselves free from threats and intimidations or that opposition leaders could feel safe to

stand as candidates, would come about only if the control of this country by Communist armies were removed, or at any rate sufficiently relaxed to enable genuine supervision by an objective international commission to take place. To say, therefore, that we agree on free elections would be quite false unless we had agreed also on an effective programme of supervision. That we have not agreed on an effective programme of supervision is all too clear for reasons which I shall explain subsequently.

To illustrate to Mr. Molotov the grave difficulties we have in stating that we agree with him on this principle, I should like to enumerate some of the questions which we must face. Do the Communist representatives agree, for example, that any Korean citizen can be a candidate for the legislature, or do they intend that only candidates "approved" by the all-Korean "body" may seek election? As freedom for candidates to campaign is a vital part of free elections, are the Communists prepared to agree to the terms of the fifth item of the South Korean proposals calling for full freedom of movement, speech, etc., for candidates, campaigners and their families? Under the Communist proposals would the all-Korean legislature be completely sovereign within Korea and would the executive branch of the Government derive its authority from majority support in the Legislature or would the executive be separate from the Legislature? There are varying democratic solutions to these questions but it is most important in this case to know how the executive would be chosen. Is it perhaps intended that it should be chosen by the all-Korean "body" in which the Communists would retain veto power? Since the Communist representatives insist that the question of Korea's future constitution is not a matter for consideration by this conference, do they envisage that the freely elected legislature would be a constituent assembly empowered to draft a constitution by majority vote or do they perhaps intend that the Korean constitution should be drawn up by the all-Korean body in which a small minority of the population would have grossly inflated representation? These are not questions which we are asking in the expectation that Mr. Molotov will provide us with immediate satisfactory replies but they are questions which although they may be considered matters of detail are matters on which we must reach an understanding before we can be said to agree in principle.

In the second place, Mr. Molotov has made an interesting and not unconvincing argument for the establishment of an all-Korean body to prepare and hold the general elections. We are not prepared to reject out of hand the conception of an all-Korean commission for the purposes mentioned by Mr. Molotov, but so much depends on the composition and function of this commission that we could hardly be said to agree unless our conceptions of the commission are more alike than they seem to be. To us it is conceivable that for certain very limited purposes of removing the present barriers even a commission composed on a fifty-fifty basis might be acceptable. However, we would find it much more difficult to believe that there was justice in establishing a commission to settle all the electoral details for the whole country which was composed with such complete disregard to the division of population. It is clear, therefore, that the questions of composition and function are essential components of the principle of an all-Korean commission. They cannot be divorced from it and they cannot be left for

subsequent consideration. Therefore, while we might be prepared to consider such a commission in principle, we could not possibly do so unless we were sure that we had the same conception of its composition and functions. Unfortunately, however, everything that has been said on this subject by Communist spokesmen leads us to believe that they have in mind not a commission to assist the people of all Korea to express their will but a commission which could be used, as such bodies have been used in other countries, to establish, if not immediate Communist domination, at least so disproportionate a representation of Communists in the government in relation to their actual strength in the country that their programme for seizing power would be vastly strengthened and accelerated. If the Communists consider that we are unduly suspicious or lacking in open-mindedness in this matter, they must ask themselves whether their record of accomplishment in Eastern Europe and of frustrated accomplishment in other countries has not given us strong reasons for scepticism.

Let me again in this connection outline a few of the questions which must be solved before we can talk about agreement in principle. If this all-Korean body is to act only by unanimous decision, the veto power involved will be of crucial importance in connection with the task to be carried out. What exactly do the Communists mean when they say that the body would facilitate "a rapprochement" between the two Koreas? Would this mean that it would act as an interim government or that it would set up an interim government of some kind, or would it be responsible for drafting an all-Korean constitution? How far will the responsibility of the body go in the preparation and conduct of the elections? Would the body be expected to rule upon the acceptability of the candidates and of parties? Would the body be solely responsible for the selection of scrutineers? Would it be responsible for establishing a police force to maintain law and order during the elections or would the international Supervisory Commission assist it in this task? What other functions would the body have? If the body is to have any significant executive powers and is to be more than a negotiating agency for arranging elections, the veto power involved could completely prejudice the freedom of the elections or the establishment of a truly representative government after the elections. It is only if we have settled some of these questions that we can determine whether Mr. Molotov's principle is intended to assist the democratic processes or is merely another sinister manoeuvre of a familiar kind to frustrate the will of the people.

Mr. Molotov's proposal for an agreement on the withdrawal of forces is even more deceptive, because he has endeavoured to gloss over in a subordinate phrase the basic difference which clearly exists between us. This basic difference, which has been frequently stated, is whether the United Nations forces which came to the defence of the Republic of Korea and which want only to assist in the establishment of genuine Korean self-government in accordance with the wishes of the Korean people and then to withdraw, should be treated on the same basis as those forces which came into Korea against the wishes of the Korean people and have sought to assist in establishing in that country a form of government which the majority of the Korean people clearly do not want. As I mentioned earlier, Mr. Molotov has attempted to blur this issue by referring to the withdrawal of "American troops" rather than to United Nations troops. We cannot, however, reach agreement in

principle by obscuring this essential matter, and so long as the Communists refuse to recognize the position of the United Nations forces, it would be misleading to talk about agreement in principle.

In the fourth place, Mr. Molotov has raised the question of a supervisory commission. As the Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs stated recently in the House of Commons, we believe that Korean elections "should be supervised by an international agency agreed on, if possible, by the Geneva Conference but acceptable to the United Nations". Mr. Pearson went on to say "In order to ensure maximum objectivity - and that is going quite a long way to meet the views of the other side - we felt that this supervisory agency might consist of nations which did not belong to the Communist bloc and which did not participate in military operations in Korea". It cannot be said that our attitude on this is rigid - we are prepared to go a long way to make sure that such a commission is genuinely neutral. We believe that it is possible that countries which are accustomed to approach international problems freely and objectively can provide neutral supervision. The role played by the Indian military representatives in the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission is a good example of the kind of assistance which can be obtained from countries of good-will. In the NNRC the Indian members were by no means always in agreement with the United Nations Command, but we did not question the honesty of their intentions or their integrity. This is what we mean when we talk of international neutral supervision. Unfortunately, however, Mr. Molotov has betrayed what he means by supporting the proposal that the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission which at present exists in Korea should be duplicated for the purpose of supervising Korean elections. There is little further that need be said on the subject than has been said already by Mr. Bedell Smith and in the report of the Swiss and Swedish members of the Commission on the behaviour of their Czechoslovak and Polish colleagues. If by a neutral international commission Mr. Molotov means a commission which includes such totally unneutral nations as Poland and Czechoslovakia, it is clear that we are not agreed in principle and should not say that we are. Furthermore, we cannot talk about agreement in principle on such a commission unless we have determined not only its composition but also its function. If we are to agree to the principle of such a commission, we would agree only on the establishing of a commission with real powers to make certain that freedom of choice exists for the electors in all parts of Korea. This question of function is in no sense a detail which could be put off for subsequent discussion, because it is basic to the principle itself.

What in this connection do the Communists mean by "supervision"? Would the Commission which they envisage merely observe the elections or would it have the power and the means to correct conditions which interfere with the proper conduct of the elections? Would it be competent to appoint scrutineers? Would it assist the all-Korean body in maintaining law and order before and during the elections? In short would it be a powerless excrescence or would it have an active and useful role to play in ensuring fair play and a free choice of representatives by the electorate?

In his fifth point, Mr. Molotov has mentioned the possibility of states most interested in Korea accepting obligations for its peaceful development. The Canadian delegation has listened with an open mind and not without interest to the repeated emphasis of the Communist spokesmen on this theme. The possibility of some kind of guarantee of the peaceful development of Korea by other powers is one which certainly could be considered, and a determination on the part of interested powers to assist Korea to rehabilitate itself ought not to be rejected. We have noted, however, that on each of the many occasions when this subject has been mentioned, the spokesman has, after a promising introduction, retreated into extremely obscure language when he comes to defining the purposes of such a guarantee or statement of obligations. We have never been given any clear indication at all of what the representatives of North Korea, the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union really have in mind. If, for example, they are interested in outside assistance to Korea in its economic development, as has been implied in several statements, we must point out that the United Nations accepted such an obligation in the early stages of hostilities in Korea, that members of the United Nations have contributed substantial sums to this project, and that the United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency has established itself in Korea and has already made important contributions to the economic life of that country. It was clearly understood when UNKRA was established that its activities might be extended into North Korea. This is no partisan activity; it is intended for the benefit of all the people of that unfortunate country. It is a most substantial effort to assist in the peaceful development of Korea, and it is not the United Nations which stands in the way of its operating in the entire country. If, as seems likely from Mr. Molotov's proposal, there is more involved than economic assistance, we can hardly be said to agree in principle when we really don't know what Mr. Molotov is talking about. He himself has said, "The question as to what particular states should undertake the said obligations as well as the question of the nature of such obligations should be discussed additionally". To agree in principle on this point would therefore make about as much sense as it would for us to issue a general statement that we are in favour of treaties without any indication of what kind of treaties or who were to be our partners. Once again we must emphasize the fact that the so-called details are not extraneous to the principle but essential to it.

One other matter in this connection. In his fifth point Mr. Molotov has mentioned the importance of creating conditions which would prevent the violation of the armistice agreement in Korea. That agreement has been approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations. Its conclusion marked the accomplishment of all that the United Nations ever undertook to do by armed force in Korea. The aggression had been repelled. Our business is to work for the establishment of a unified, democratic and free Korea and we must not be deflected from it. The armistice agreement is not an issue here. Its preamble clearly set forth its objective to "insure a complete cessation of hostilities and over all acts of armed force in Korea until a final peaceful settlement is achieved...."

In conclusion, I should like to say that we of the Canadian delegation should like nothing more than to be able to register the agreement of this conference on the principles of settling such important points as those referred to in Mr. Molotov's resolution. We even like the idea of trying to register at this point what limited agreements we may have achieved and then settling down seriously to solve those problems which remain, and it is a considerable temptation to do so, even on Mr. Molotov's terms. We have given the most careful examination to this resolution in the hope that we could find a basis of agreement, but we are led to the inescapable conclusion that to do so at the present time would be dishonest. It would mean deliberate misrepresentation to the public of the world and could lead only to charges of bad faith at a later stage. Insofar as there are in the resolution some fundamental principles on which we are said by Mr. Molotov to agree, such as the establishment of a united independent Korea and the ultimate withdrawal of foreign forces, these were agreed upon before this conference began and can hardly be said, therefore, to represent an advance. Mr. Molotov wants us to talk about broad principles which sound easy and attractive and to leave the difficult details till later. This, however, is a method of approach which could have disastrous results. I am sure that if Mr. Vyshinsky were here he could supply a good Russian proverb explaining what happens to carts when they are put before horses. However attractive it might be to reach agreement at this point - and no one is more anxious to reach genuine agreement than we are - nevertheless, we believe that in the long-run it will be better if we squarely face the facts of our disagreement and acknowledge them than to delude ourselves with false hopes and lead the people of the world to believe that there is agreement when there is no agreement.

S/C