



# STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION  
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
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## THE QUESTION OF HUNGARY

Statement by Mr. W.B. Nesbitt, Vice-Chairman of the Canadian Delegation, in the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 8, 1959.

...The Canadian Delegation comes to this discussion of the report of the United Nations Special Representative on the question of Hungary with a deep feeling for its immediate as well as long-run significance. We also come to this debate today with a sense of sadness that the Hungarian question should still be before us and should now be aggravated by new allegations of violations of human rights and a general disregard for the good opinion of many states.

The report of the Special Representative charges that a regime of great rigour and repression continues to operate in controlling the lives of the Hungarian people. If, in October - November 1956, this was a matter of proper human and constitutional concern for the United Nations, there is no reason to doubt the continuing right of the United Nations to be concerned in December 1959, when the allegations of repression remain as strong as they do in the report of the Special Representative.

The Canadian Delegation is aware of how often the Government of Hungary has denied the charges of repression and, too, how insistent has been its view, as well as the view of some small number of member states allied with it, that whatever has taken place or is taking place in Hungary is a matter essentially of domestic jurisdiction and, therefore, beyond the proper scope of the Assembly's legal interest.

Each member state is, of course, entitled to treat its internal security problems as matters essentially within its domestic jurisdiction. With this thesis the Canadian Government could have no quarrel. But when that criminal law and administration go so far as to offend the very spirit of the purposes and principles of the Charter, the issue may, in some of its aspects, become one of essential United Nations concern.

The Canadian Delegation cannot therefore accept either the denial of facts as such or the denial of a United Nations interest in this area. Our position rests on a simple proposition: bearing in mind the provisions of the Paris Peace Treaty of 1947 and its guarantees of independence and human rights for the people of Hungary, and having in mind, too, the violent events in Hungary in October-November of 1956, the great majority of member states believed not only that there had been an unlawful "intervention" in the affairs of Hungary by another state causing great disruption there, but also that there had been important violations of human rights to which the United Nations could not be indifferent. Moreover, these violations continued long after the military intervention aspects had disappeared. These are facts of wide public knowledge and acceptance.

Indeed, it is possible to say that once the period of military intervention had passed, the behaviour of the Hungarian Government towards its own people involved so substantial an interference with the conception of decent levels of behaviour by states toward their peoples that the United Nations could not have remained indifferent. Moreover, if the Hungarian Government had wished to bring these allegations to an end, it could, at least, have provided some measure of co-operation with the United Nations in the various resolutions passed since 1956 inviting such co-operation, particularly by admitting United Nations representatives to make on-the-spot enquiries in order to be able to report back to the Assembly on the basis of a firm foundation of observed fact.

We all know the story. The present Government of Hungary, claiming the right of a sovereign state to be free from interference in its domestic affairs, has refused to permit any semblance of United Nations or other type of enquiry into the record of the regime since those events in the autumn of 1956. I presume that matters might have drifted in this way even with the appointment of the present United Nations Special Representative, whose report is now before us, had it not been for two recent developments. The first of these arises from the very considerable efforts that have been made by Prime Minister Macmillan, President Eisenhower and other Western leaders, and by Premier Khrushchov to provide the foundations for a relaxation of tensions and for the possibility of conferences among the leading powers in order to deal with some of the more difficult problems now dividing them. A new spirit, whether described as of "Camp David" or simply as a fresh effort at a détente, now pervades many aspects of major dealings between the two sides in world politics today. Since it is well understood that the Government of Hungary has the closest of ties with the Government of the Soviet Union, it is a matter of great surprise to the Canadian Delegation that the friends of Hungary should not advise her on the political and moral inconsistency of the continuing unco-operative Hungarian attitude towards the ascertainment of facts

about conditions there and towards the present search for a sound basis by both "camps" to approach, in a new spirit, their grave divisions.

But, if this were not enough to bring forcibly to our attention the substance of the Special Representatives's report, there is in the opinion of the Canadian Delegation reason to believe, or at least to suspect, that new and shocking events may have taken place in recent months in Hungary. I refer here to paragraphs 30 to 34 of the Special Representative's report dealing with the recent allegations that have appeared in the press of many parts of the world that many young persons had been held for trial since 1956, who at that time were below the age provided by Hungarian criminal law for the applications of severe penalties for certain political and kindred offences. I wish to say that my Government does not necessarily believe all the rumours that have been circulating for the past several weeks in Canada and the United States and that have been widely reported upon in the press of many countries. But I cannot deny that these reports have disturbed us greatly and that the people of Canada are deeply distressed at the possibility that they may be true.

I am aware that the nature of the evidence supporting these allegations of cruel judicial procedures toward young people may not be such as to satisfy objective observers desiring the most severe test for such evidence. Nevertheless, apart from newspaper reports, there is the already well-known Bulletin No. 9 of the International Commission of Jurists, which reports in some detail on trials held in camera on confessions obtained from young accused persons and on a number of executions. This bulletin, which is to be found as an appendix to a recent issue of the Journal of the International Commission of Jurists, cannot be dismissed easily. Too many responsible jurists, including many Canadians, are members of this organization for the seriousness of its efforts or the objectivity of its conclusions to be doubted.

Surely what is needed here are not denials but some gesture that would help dissipate this cloud of angry suspicion that now has begun again to cover the relations of Hungary and many member states. My Delegation desires only to see that the minds of decent people everywhere can somehow or other be satisfied that charges of this nature that have been made and referred to in the Special Representative's report are baseless and that the Government of Hungary, in the proper exercise of its own political powers, is behaving no differently than might be expected of any other state faced with normal questions of the maintenance of public order.

In my Government's opinion, the only way that the Government of Hungary could possibly satisfy sympathetic observers who do not wish to remain forever suspicious of the Government of Hungary is to permit some type of enquiry, whether by the United Nations or by any other acceptable agency.

Our insistence on due acceptance by the Government of Hungary of those resolutions of the Assembly that have regularly since 1956 invited the co-operation of Hungary in such enquiries does not preclude the possibility of other devices being employed if they could elicit impartial information that would satisfy those of us who are not deeply distressed by these charges. Surely the Government of Hungary is concerned with its own good name in the world and in the United Nations. Surely it would want to set at rest the rising volume of distressed concern that now permeates the attitude of many member states toward it, with particular reference to these new charges concerning the trials and possible executions of young people. Would it not be possible for the Government of Hungary to invite the International Red Cross or some similar non-governmental religious or charitable organization to make appropriate enquiries and report back to the press of the world in such a way as to put to rest once and for all the suspicions and allegations arising from the charges so frequently made in recent weeks? The Canadian Government appeals sincerely to the Government of Hungary: Do you wish to make a contribution to the emerging relaxation of tensions and to the progress toward the Summit, that is the hope of all international politics at the moment, or do you wish to embitter relations and make that emerging rapprochement, however limited or extensive its character may be, difficult and perhaps impossible? Finally, I would ask what the Government of Hungary has to lose by such an enquiry, either by the Special Representative or any other agency designated by the Assembly or by some private organization. There surely can be no question of a challenge to its sovereignty or its independence. Its membership in this organization is testament to its status, and enquiries of the kind we suggest would not detract one whit from that status. But the continued refusal to permit enquiries will detract profoundly from that other status it no doubt wishes to maintain, that is, the status of a member of the family of nations whose good name in its treatment of its own people in the protection of their human rights is now under a very dark cloud.

My Delegation, as a co-sponsor of the resolution on Hungary, will therefore support any reasonable measures to encourage the Government of Hungary to co-operate in these efforts to avoid interference with the spirit of this new phase of international relations affecting all states today. We sincerely hope that the alleged events, harmful to the good name of the Government of Hungary in its treatment of young offenders,

are not taking place as reported throughout the world. But we cannot be content with a silence that may imply damaging admissions. It is for the Government of Hungary to move all of us from suspicion to satisfaction, from a sense of distress to a knowledge that puts conscience to rest.

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