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THE PRICE OF PEACE

A broadcast by Mr. L.B. Pearson,
Secretary of State for External Affairs,
made on May 26, 1951, in a United Nations
series on this subject.

It is paradoxical but true that Korea, which has suffered so terribly from war in the past year, is also the centre of the hopes of mankind to prevent a third world war, and ultimately to establish a world community under the rule of law. For the first time in history, military action against aggression is being conducted, not nationally, but internationally. It is to Korea, then, that we should turn first in considering the price we must be willing to pay for peace.

Essentially, the mission of the United Nations in Korea is to defeat aggression, so that the lesson of that defeat may help to prevent a third world war. If the aggression in Korea had been allowed to succeed without any attempt being made to resist it, other acts of aggression against small countries on the borders of the free world would certainly have followed. The strength of the free peoples would have been eaten away piece-meal in accordance with the plans of the Politburo and the Cominform. Eventually, a stage would have been reached when the remaining countries which were still free and independent would have realized that they had either to wage war with fewer resources and with much slighter hope of success, or else be enslaved by Communist imperialism. Because they would certainly have chosen to fight, rather than to submit, a third world war would in those circumstances have been inevitable.

To the infantryman slogging over the muddy paddy fields of Korea it may seem odd to say that his mission is to prevent a third world war. He may well be forgiven for not seeing much difference between such a war and the bloody business in which he is engaged. That viewpoint must certainly command our sympathy. But we mustn't forget that a third world war would be very different from the campaign now being fought in Korea. It would be an atomic war which would result in the death of hundreds of thousands of people at one stroke and which would leave the earth pock-marked and infected with radio-activity for years to come. That is the night-mare which we are trying by every means in our power to avoid. When viewed in that light, I believe that the men of the United Nations in Korea will see that their task, disagreeable and dangerous as it is, is supremely worth-while. Indeed, it is indispensable if we are to be successful in avoiding a general conflict.

But the courage being displayed by the United Nations forces in Korea may be in vain if the conflict there is enlarged and extended, and, especially if we bring on the very

cataclysm which the United Nations action in Korea can help to prevent. It may be that in spite of all our efforts the catastrophe of a third world war will overtake us. In that case, let the responsibility for the anguish, devastation and anarchy which it will cause rest on other hands than ours.

What, then, can we do? Is United Nations action in Korea to trickle away into the sands of futility and stalemate? I do not think so. If United Nations forces can continue to throw back the aggressors with heavy losses, and at the same time to avoid any measures which are not absolutely necessary from a military point of view and which might lead to the conflict spreading, the Chinese Government in Peking may decide that it would be folly for them to persist in the destructive course they have begun. We must hope that the day will come when they will realize that it is not China, but Russia, which is being served by the aggression in Korea in which they have participated. Then, they may be ready to enter into discussions leading to a settlement of Korean and other Far Eastern issues, on terms that the United Nations can accept. Meanwhile, the fighting goes on. The courageous men of the United States of America and South Korea still are bearing the brunt of the battle, but they are assisted by contingents from sixteen United Nations countries. In that array, we in Canada are proud to include a Brigade Group of our finest men, all of whom have volunteered to serve the cause of the United Nations and of peace.

Already in its brief history the United Nations has had notable successes in settling international disputes by mediation and conciliation. The Indonesian and the Palestine disputes both held grave possibilities and might have led to widespread conflict if the United Nations had not been patient and persistent in attempting to reach a peaceful settlement. The organization's conciliatory functions are as important as those in organizing collective action against aggression. They will ultimately be required, I believe, if we are to find an honourable and stable conclusion to the war in Korea.

Indeed, settlement of disputes by discussion and compromise must be regarded as one of the basic foundations of the international community. The essential task of politics at all times and in all parts of the world has been to harmonize the interests of different groups of individuals. That task in the international sphere has become both more urgent and more difficult now that the world has been so drastically shrunk by scientific and technological changes. The problem now is not only how men and nations can live in harmony, but how they can live at all if their separate interests cannot be harmonized. We in the West must take the lead in defending the peace against aggressive Communist imperialism. But we must also accommodate ourselves to the fact that our civilization must now be considered as only one of many. We may, for instance, need to show more humility and understanding than we have at times in the past. We should, of course, honour as much as ever the particular traditions which we have inherited. But we must recognize that we now share the world with other independent and, indeed, renaissance civilizations; particularly in the Far East, where nearly one-half of the world's people are now stirring and striving after some of the things which we of the West take so much for granted.

One of the most fruitful bases for co-operation between different civilizations, I think, is a common effort to meet the material needs of those who are now living in poverty and hunger. The causes of war are manifold and sometimes obscure. But it is

clear that the maintenance of peace is closely related to the great work of social and economic development throughout the world. Peace, unaccompanied by a steady improvement in the lot of all peoples, would be an unstable and insufficient achievement of the United Nations. So we of the richer countries must help to remove want and suffering, if we are to build an international community on sound foundations. We cannot hope to reside comfortably in a rich suburb surrounded by slums.

In Korea at the present time the process of discussion as a means of settling international disputes has broken down. As a result of a naked act of aggression and of continued defiance by the aggressors, the effort to harmonize conflicting interests by international discussions is in abeyance. But more than the texture of discussion has been destroyed. The fabric of social life in Korea has been destroyed. This is the worst result of war, even on a limited scale. And, once war has broken out, there is always a risk that the unravelling and disintegration it produces may spread.

We can prevent all this by banding together our strength to defeat aggression, as we are now doing in Korea; by being ready to seize any opportunity for an honourable settlement by negotiation which may present itself, and by strengthening the social, economic and moral fabric of the free world. Such a policy calls for heavy sacrifices from the fighting men of the United Nations in Korea. They are already paying a high price for peace; and they naturally wish a clear-cut and victorious result. But victory in this type of limited United Nations war may not have to be the kind of complete capitulation of the enemy with which we have been made familiar. Victory is the achievement of our objectives, and they remain the defeat of aggression against the Republic of Korea.

It is a proud mission for any man to be helping to avert a war in which the whole of civilization might be destroyed. The military forces of the United Nations will continue to do their part to that end, by resisting the aggressor in Korea. If we who work behind the ramparts they provide are ready for sacrifices in order to spread the material advantages of our civilization more evenly throughout the world and to forge the weapons necessary for the defence of freedom, we will have firm ground for hope that the peace of the world can be maintained.

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