

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

NO. 50/51

CANADIAN POLICY IN THE PRESENT INTERNATIONAL
CRISIS

Text of a broadcast delivered by
Mr. L.B. Pearson, Secretary of State
for External Affairs, over the Trans-
Canada Network, on December 5, 1950.

I am speaking to you tonight from Lake Success on the eve of discussions here of far-reaching importance. So I should like to tell you how the situation looks to me and to outline, as frankly, and honestly and objectively as I can, the policy which I think we should follow.

In order to set the present crisis in perspective, let me go back to the international situation as it existed before the attack on the Republic of Korea on the 25th of June last. At that time, there was a kind of uneasy balance throughout the world between the countries under the influence and domination of Soviet Communism, and those where free institutions still prevailed. So long as that balance lasted, delicate, precarious and unsatisfactory though it was, there were grounds for hoping that these two forms of society could exist side by side, if only on the basis of mutual toleration; grounds for some hope also that, in time, changes might occur within the Soviet Communist system which would give back their freedom to peoples now living under tyranny, or which might make possible the negotiation of political differences.

This balance was marked by a fairly clear territorial line of division separating the free and the Soviet worlds. At some points the line could not be drawn exactly. At others, at the boundary of the Western sector of Berlin, for example, and along the 38th parallel in Korea - it was sharp and unmistakable.

This line separating the two worlds, which at times cuts across national boundaries, was not something which we liked. But it seemed, for the time being, the only possible basis for that uneasy truce which we have called peace.

This balance was upset by the communist attack on the Republic of Korea. From the outset, it was clear that this act of open and armed aggression might have consequences which would prevent us from re-establishing any tolerable relationship with the Soviet world, might even lead to a Third World War. One of the most serious charges against the North Korean Government and against those governments in Moscow and Peking which stood behind it, is that they were willing to run this enormous risk not only for themselves, but for the whole world.

Ever since the attack on the Republic of Korea, we have believed that the efforts of those who supported United Nations action, should be directed solely towards defeating the aggression and thereby halting the chain reaction which might have followed its success. The men who decide the policies of the Soviet Union and of their communist satellites could gamble with the future of the world in order to extend the boundaries of the system under their control. We were not prepared to gamble in that reckless way. Conscious of our share of responsibility for the preservation of peace and freedom, and indeed for the preservation of human kind from the mass destruction which modern weapons make possible, we believed, and continue to believe, that we should not try to do more, in defeating this aggression, than restore the freedom and unity of Korea. The brave and strong leader in this United Nations effort is the United States. I am sure that our neighbour, in spite of provocation and notwithstanding Chinese Communist charges to the contrary, has had no thought of using the Korean situation to strengthen or expand its position in Asia or to menace any other state. If that had been its policy, United Nations action in Korea would not have received the support of 52 of its member states, including Canada.

It was obvious that, if this peace-restoring policy of the United Nations were to be achieved, the first step must be to defeat the aggressor, while respecting the legitimate fears and interests of Korea's neighbours. But this attack which showed that the communist war lords were willing to use military force to achieve their purposes, also exposed the military weakness of the free democracies and the absence of any effective arrangements under the United Nations by which such strength as they had could be mobilized quickly.

Therefore, if we were to be in a position to meet new attacks in other parts of the world, our defensive strength had to be increased, and we had to work out more effective arrangements under the United Nations by which that strength could be used collectively. We have made progress towards both these ends.

Meanwhile, the United Nations forces in Korea, under General MacArthur, were winning notable successes. After the landings at Inchon and the defeat of the invaders in South Korea, however, our efforts to restore stability entered a new phase. What we had now to solve was more than a military problem. We had to determine in what way, and at what point we would attempt to re-establish the political position in the Korean area. On a problem of that kind there could easily and properly be a number of different opinions. I do not intend to examine the various opinions which were put forward, except to say that in all the discussions of this problem which have taken place at Lake Success, in Washington, in London and elsewhere, we have consistently urged that moderation and a sense of global strategy, both military and political, should be our guide in deciding at what point military operations should be broken off and the work of pacification and reconstruction begun. We still believe that that is the proper rule to follow.

It is now clear that in a further reckless act the Chinese Communists have intervened in Korea in very large numbers. Their final purpose is not yet beyond doubt, but certainly they have committed themselves to an incursion far in excess of any that might be explained by nervousness over local Chinese interests along the border between Manchuria and Korea. In this dangerous situation, it remains our view that if and when the military position is stabilized, we should try to begin negotiations with the Chinese Communists by every means possible. I am aware of the difficulties, I assure you, but I believe that nothing should be left undone which might conceivably result in an honourable and peaceful settlement in Korea. If, for example, providing the military situation is stabilized, there could be a cease-fire followed by negotiations - possibly covering more subjects than Korea - in which the Chinese Communists would participate, there might still be hope of reaching such a settlement. At least, we would have done our best and the responsibility for failure could be placed where it would belong.

I know that the policy I suggest will be called "appeasement" by some. "Warmonger", "fascist", "appeaser", "red", "peace", "democracy", such words are now used so loosely and irresponsibly that their coinage has become debased. So let us not be frightened by words. The action which was taken at Munich in 1938 and which has made "appeasement" a by-word, was open to two charges: that it was short-sighted because it was based on illusions about the nature of the government which was the aggressor at that time, and that it was shameful because it sacrificed the freedom of one country in the interests of the security of others. Neither of those accusations can be brought against the policy I have outlined. It is not appeasement. It is an attempt through diplomacy to reach a modus vivendi with the Asian Communist world. The United Nations Commander in Korea himself has remitted to diplomacy the task of deciding what to do in Korea in this new situation created by Chinese intervention. It is the function of diplomacy to seek accommodation which can be the basis for stable relations between differing countries and systems. We have agreed in the past that some such accommodation with the Soviet Union and its satellites is necessary. In the present circumstances, I believe it is our duty to make every effort to reach such a settlement.

But we must not allow this process -- or the situation which makes it necessary -- to weaken our resolve or interfere with our plan to strengthen our defences. Above all, we must not allow it to weaken the unity, or the friendly co-operation of those countries in the free world who are now working together so closely for the good purpose of establishing conditions of stability and peace in the world.

Our task will be complicated by the necessity of keeping in mind both political and military considerations. Both, for instance, must be present in any consideration of the possible use of the atomic bomb. From the strictly legal point of view, the atomic bomb is merely another weapon, and can be used like any other weapon. The supreme crime is not the use of a particular weapon, but committing an aggression which makes the use of any weapon necessary.

The political instinct of people throughout the world, however, has insisted - and I think rightly - that the atomic bomb is different from other weapons. Not only is its destructive power far greater than that

of any other weapon, but it was created as a result of the deepest penetration that man has yet made into the fundamental secrets of Nature, and if used widely enough, might destroy all life on this planet. Whether or not to use a weapon of that kind should surely not be decided by the application of the same criteria applicable to other weapons, or by unilateral decision, no matter what the technical and legal position may be. At a time of military reverses, when soldiers are trapped and encircled and are dying desperately, there will naturally be a strong temptation to sanction the use of the atomic bomb. Anyone considering such authorization, however, must remember that the fate of the whole world may depend on the decision. The atomic bomb is universally regarded as the ultimate weapon. It should be treated as such.

This is a time of desperately hard decisions. It is also a time which will demand greater sacrifices than we in Canada have ever before been asked to make; and without much of the stimulation and excitement and feeling of survival or extinction that accompanies a shooting war.

It may be that in the days ahead the process of negotiation which I have suggested will become impossible or will be tried and fail. Then those who use force will have to be met by all the force we can muster in the free world. Until that time, however, we must guard freedom by wisdom, as well as by arms.

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