

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES



CANADA

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 55/2 FORMOSA

Statement by the Secretary of State
for External Affairs, Mr. L.B. Pearson,
made in the House of Commons, January 25,
1955.

In reply to what my hon. friend (Mr. Coldwell) has said, and also in reply to the question asked yesterday by the hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker), I shall make a statement on this matter now, as follows:

The President of the United States yesterday sent to Congress an important message dealing with the situation in the Formosa straits. The President's proposals in this message are, of course, a matter of United States policy. The United States has particular commitments of its own in this area. These, and the effect of the President's message on them, will now be under consideration by Congress and it would not, of course, be appropriate for me, or for any member of this government, to comment on this aspect of the matter.

Although we are not involved in United States commitments in this area, we are of course deeply concerned over the dangerous situation existing there and we, with other free governments, are anxious that steps should be taken to bring to an end the fighting which has now been taking place for some time along the China coast.

In this message the President of the United States referred to the possibility of action by the United Nations to bring about a cease-fire. The United Nations has, in Indonesia, Palestine and in other parts of the world, been successful in bringing to an end fighting which might have had dangerous consequences, and if it could achieve similar results in this case it would be a cause, I am sure, of great satisfaction to us all.

If the question is raised in the United Nations - and there are reports that it will soon be raised - this would presumably take place in the Security Council of which Canada is not at present a member. However, we are being kept informed of developments in regard to the possibility of such a reference, and we are watching the

matter with great interest and some concern. Incidentally, an essential party to any cease-fire of this kind would be the communist government of China, which, though a non-member of the United Nations, would have to be invited, I assume, to participate in the Security Council deliberations if they were to have any chance of success. Whether this particular government would accept such an invitation is another matter.

While it is not proper for me to comment on United States policy in this matter which is now being considered by Congress, I think I can say that any move or proposal within the United Nations or through diplomatic channels which could serve to achieve the purpose as stated in the President's message "to improve the prospects of peace in the area" will be warmly welcomed by the parliament and by the people of this country.

Before the Korean armistice I expressed on more than one occasion in this house the view of the Canadian Government that Formosa should be neutralized as far as possible while hostilities continued in Korea. We thought then, and we think now, that the final disposition of Formosa should be subject to be discussed at a conference on Far Eastern problems which at that time we thought might be held after the cessation of fighting in Korea. That was the view adopted by the Political Committee of the United Nations General Assembly on January 13, 1951. Despite developments since then, it remains the view of the government that the final disposition of Formosa should be dealt with by international negotiation, at a conference, if you like, on Far Eastern problems, if one could be held. Certainly, in any decision regarding the future of Formosa the wishes of the people there, which are often forgotten in discussions of this matter, should be a primary consideration. Pending such a decision I think that a strong case can be made for the neutralization of Formosa both in order to prevent any assault upon it by communist forces and also so that it will not be used as a base for invasion of the mainland.

In this area of tension and danger a distinction can validly be made between the position of Formosa and the Pescadores and the islands off the China coast now in Nationalist hands. The latter are indisputably part of the territory of China; the former, Formosa and the Pescadores, which were Japanese colonies for fifty years prior to 1945 and had had a checkered history before that, are not. I suggest therefore that the considerations which recommend the neutralization of Formosa and the Pescadores do not necessarily apply to the coastal islands so close to the mainland and a hundred miles or so away from Formosa. Therefore, I welcome that part of the President's message which looks to the redeployment of the Nationalist forces which are now in these islands. "Some of these forces", the President's message states, "are scattered throughout smaller off-shore islands as a result of historical rather than military reasons directly related to defending Formosa".

My understanding of the basis of a truce or cease-fire is that neither the Nationalists, the government of China which we recognize, nor the Communists need be asked

to give up their claims on the territory now held by the other side. What they would be asked to give up of course is the use of military means to achieve their aspirations. In other words, negotiations for a cease-fire need not involve any question of the final disposition of the territory in dispute; for in our view this is a suitable matter for international negotiation at a later date through the United Nations or otherwise.

I am sure this House will particularly welcome the closing paragraph of the President's message which is as follows:

"Our purpose is peace. That cause will be served if we demonstrate our unity and our determination. In all that we do we shall remain faithful to our obligations as a member of the United Nations to be ready to settle our international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security, and justice, are not endangered."

S/C