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ESSENTIALS OF PEACE

Text of statement delivered by Mr. L.B. Pearson
Secretary of State for External Affairs and Chairman of the
Canadian Delegation to the United Nations General Assembly,
in the Plenary Session on December 1, 1949.

The debate on this item which the Soviet delegation placed on the agenda of the Assembly -- and which is now coming to an end -- has ranged far and wide over the fields of history, philosophy and politics. It has explored communist dogma. It has led us through the intricacies of Soviet interpretation of their own foreign policy. It has presented us anew with the familiar, and to us unconvincing communist critique of the social, economic and political system of the non-communist world. It has also, of course, produced the usual rude charges that those of us who don't agree with this critique, are "ignoramuses", "senseless babblers", "professional slanderers", etc., etc.

The debate -- here and in the First Committee -- has also produced, among many other things, a great deal of confusion. Some of this is due to deliberate efforts to confuse. Some is due to the fact that the Communist delegations have presented us with contradictions and inconsistencies.

For instance, we have listened to Mr. Vishinsky denounce as useless the Kellogg Pact and, at the same time, urge in even more general and unspecific terms than those used twenty years ago, the adoption of a new pact amongst the five Great Powers. We have heard him tell us that Marx prophesied that a capitalist society led inevitably to crises which in turn led inevitably to war. The correctness of these prophecies, he said, could be read in history. On another occasion, however, Mr. Vishinsky, referring to the future of the non-Communist world, said, and I quote his words: "I am no prophet. Marx was no prophet either". On many occasions Mr. Vishinsky went to great lengths to deny the fear that the communist party believed in the inevitability of force and violence to bring about the social and political changes in which it believes. On another occasion, however, and again I quote his exact words, he said that, "now both in the United Kingdom and in the United States, the prior condition for any people's revolution is the destruction (not change, but destruction) of the governmental system set up in those countries before the Great War".

Yet, in the face of these words and others of the same kind used by contemporary communist leaders, in the face of the violent and warlike pronouncements of the Cominform, especially those hurled at the government of Yugoslavia, Mr. Vishinsky asks us to believe in the lamblike qualities of Russian revolutionary communism. Naturally we don't believe this, and we are not deceived by it. Nor are the peoples of the world deceived except those whose minds and souls are drugged and deadened by propaganda from a state machine which prevents them securing information from any other source; a machine, which when it sees fit, can alter for Soviet consumption even the text of speeches given here by the Foreign Minister of the U.S.S.R.

Communist delegations have been accusing us -- and I have been honoured by specific inclusion in this list -- of trying to divert attention

from their peaceful intentions by introducing confusing and irrelevant issues. To them any issue which is embarrassing is irrelevant just as any quotation which is disturbing is "torn out of its context". But what is relevant to Mr. Vishinsky; what coherent pattern emerges from the hours and hours of talk in this debate which we have heard from the communist delegations? What does Mr. Vishinsky really want? Essentially it is this; that we should brand the United States and United Kingdom as war-mongers; then, so branded, they should be embraced by the U.S.S.R. in a pact of peace and, touched by this fraternal embrace, they and the other democratic countries should disarm unilaterally, without any adequate assurance that the most heavily armed country in the world will put into effect similar measures of disarmament or that it will co-operate in a sincere and earnest desire to close the gap that now divides the world.

This kind of "propaganda disarmament" has been exposed so many times as a manoeuvre, not only futile for, but even dangerous to, peace, that there is little to be added. It has never been exposed more effectively than in the following paragraph from the official Soviet History of Diplomacy published in the U.S.S.R. in 1945. That passage translated into English reads:

"To the same group of examples of the concealment of predatory ends behind noble principles also belong the instances of the exploitation of the idea of disarmament and pacifist propaganda in the broad sense of the word for one's own purposes.

From time immemorial, the idea of disarmament has been one of the most favoured forms of diplomatic dissimulation of the true motives and plans of those governments which have been seized by such a sudden love of peace. This phenomenon is very understandable. Any proposal for the reduction of armaments could invariably count upon broad popularity and support from public opinion. But, of course, he who proposed such a measure always had to foresee that his intentions would be divined by the partners in this diplomatic game."

We must, however, do our best to draw some permanent benefit from the long and arduous debate in which we have been engaged. With this in mind, I wish to draw the attention of the Assembly to two or three points which have emerged and which seemed to me to point to practical measures which could be taken to restore the confidence which we so greatly need.

When he opened his remarks in the Political Committee, Mr. Vishinsky spoke of a reference which I had made to the growth of what I termed a new imperialism in the East of Europe. This was one of the occasions on which he said that I had been trying to confuse the issue of the debate. If, however, Mr. Vishinsky really wishes to do something about the preservation of peace, he should persuade his government to pay some attention to the fear in the world of this new imperialism; to the concern -- deep and wide-spread -- about the methods which it adopts to spread its influence, and the threats to peace which are inherent in those methods. Within the U.S.S.R. sphere of influence -- the new Soviet Empire -- have been included many peoples who previously had their own free governments: Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Poles, Roumanians. Not all the impassioned eloquence of Mr. Vishinsky or Mr. Manuilsky can convince us that these peoples, of their own free will, happily and confidently have entrusted their destinies and their persons to the U.S.S.R. The fact that the Soviet government find it necessary to cut off their inhabitants from all normal contacts with other countries; to distort and manipulate information about other peoples in order to create misunderstanding and fear is convincing evidence to the contrary.

The methods used to create and maintain this Soviet sphere of influence have converted it into one of the most unstable, restless and

explosive areas of the world. That is a pressing danger to peace, the evidence of which is before us every day. Thousands of people from the Baltic communities have had to be expelled from their homes; a Marshal of the U.S.S.R. has become the Polish Defence Minister; the leader of the Hungarian Church has had to be imprisoned; a communist Foreign Minister of Hungary has been hanged for treason; the government of Czechoslovakia has been catapulted into a persecution of its middle classes. The communist governments of Roumania and Bulgaria have been engulfed in internal dissension and the people of Albania have been involved in an economic crisis which daily threatens their existence. And to complete the picture, the people of Yugoslavia have now had to stake their very lives on an effort, single-handed, to free themselves from the yoke of Soviet domination.

Mr. President, this is a frightening state of affairs. It is therefore my sincere and earnest hope that, as a contribution to the peace of the world, the government of the U.S.S.R. will abandon this aggressive intervention in the affairs of other countries. Peoples are gaining their freedom in other parts of the world by a process of adjustment and negotiation. If the Soviet Union will relax its tight grip over the people on its borders, so that they too may work out freely their relations with their great neighbours we shall all breathe more easily. We do not wish a third time to see the world engulfed in war because of trouble in the Balkans or in the Russian border-lands.

There are still other practical measures by which we might remove the fear of war. I am not sure from his many statements whether or not Mr. Vishinsky really believes that it is possible to organize peace. Again and again he told us that he was convinced that the rest of the world was determined to make war upon the Soviet Union. If he believes that the fifty-four states which refused to vote for his resolution are planning an attack on his country, I do not suppose that anything we can say or do can put his mind to rest. In spite of everything he has said about disarmament, he does not even think that disarmament would bring him much comfort. On one occasion for example, he made the following assertion about Iceland, which he regards as a danger to the Soviet Union even though it is totally disarmed. He said: "As if it were necessary to have an army to be a warmonger, as if it were necessary to have naval and air forces to be a warmonger. If one went along on that basis, one could conclude that whoever has the greatest army is a warmonger, whoever has the greatest navy is a greater warmonger, and whoever has the greatest air force is the greatest warmonger. Then we could just pick and choose." Mr. Vishinsky seems by this to think that military preparations bear no relation to the evil intentions that he fears. From this one can only conclude that he considers himself in danger no matter what happens.

If Mr. Vishinsky were always as discouraging as this, there would be no point in our continuing the debate, and it would be better for us to pack up and go home. On other occasions, however, he has taken a quite different line, and seemed to indicate that it was possible for the Soviet position to be flexible and even conciliatory. At one point in our debate for example, he said the following: "I remember that at one meeting of the Committee, the representative of Uruguay reported that in a dispute between Bolivia and Peru, 65 proposals were submitted, that the 66th proposal was finally adopted and that it removed the conflict between those two Latin American countries. If this is so, why cannot we strive, why cannot we now face all divergencies of opinion, keep looking for the true road toward co-operation and the resolution of differences? Why cannot we keep hoping that we shall find the solution eventually -- if we are really permeated with the desire to find it, which is the main point?" On still another occasion Mr. Kiselev asserted that Marx and Lenin believed in "the possibility of good neighbourly or friendly relations between the Soviet Union and capitalist countries in general, and the United States and the United Kingdom in particular". He supported this argument by quoting Stalin to this effect: "We stand for peace and for the strengthening of business and commercial relations with all countries."

Now this is the kind of proposition that we understand and that we believe in. We are willing to negotiate with Mr. Vishinsky and his colleagues 66 times, or even 666 times, provided that Mr. Vishinsky really believes that there is some possibility of a firm and honest accommodation emerging from these discussions. There cannot, however, be such a settlement unless both sides, in the give and take of negotiation, are willing to adjust their positions when necessary, to write the agreement in simple and precise terms, to carry out its provisions in good faith, and to regard the matter as settled. We get nowhere, however, if negotiations are carried on in what is called "double talk" -- that is, if people turn up after the negotiations are ended and assert that at the conference table they had meant something quite different from what they had seemed to mean.

Let us assume, however, that Mr. Vishinsky really means what he says when he suggests that his government is willing to go steadily and patiently to the end of the long road of negotiation by which international problems are settled. This is hopeful news. It will mean more to the world than any number of five-power pacts, for it will enable us to set about solving the many outstanding problems which have been left over since the end of the war. The most dangerous feature in the immediate situation is that we may be led to think that it is hopeless to try to make this effort. History meanwhile, is adding new complications to these problems, hardening the moulds that must be changed, giving permanency to situations which we all regarded as temporary. These problems can be found at every point on the circumference of the Russian sphere of influence, and in all the major issues that stand between us. They cannot be settled without concessions on both sides. The most useful contribution that Mr. Vishinsky and his government could make to the maintenance of peace would be to come forward with practical suggestions which he honestly thinks might form a basis for reasonable negotiation for the settlement of any one of these outstanding problems. Even if we could settle one of them, the temperature of international relations would start to go down, the fevers would start to abate, and the peaceful objectives which he and his friends vociferously proclaim would come within our reach.

What we lack, of course, is mutual confidence. I do not suppose that we can restore confidence solely by talking, but I think it will be useful to us all if we study the statements that have been made in this debate. Perhaps we shall at least understand one another better. From the study that I have been able to make of them so far, I am surprised to find that Mr. Vishinsky and his colleagues seem still to be obsessed with the old fear of encirclement and intervention. At one point he said with a great show of enthusiasm that six hundred million people in the world shared his views. I presume that he reached the figure of six hundred million by adding together the two hundred million people of the Soviet Union and its borderlands in Europe and the four hundred million people of China whom he now claims to be within the communist world. Time alone will tell whether the Chinese are as zealous converts as he now assumes, but at least he is entitled to take what comfort he can out of the present circumstances. Since he reaches his figure of six hundred million people in this way, one must conclude that he regards the entire balance of the world outside this area as being hostile to the Soviet Union. Let me assure him, however, that the Russian people do have friends in the free world -- not only communist friends, but friends of all sorts who admire the courage and resourcefulness of that people and who sincerely desire to live at peace with them on the basis of mutual toleration and respect. Intervention was certainly a fact in Russian history, but it is long since dead. Why does Mr. Vishinsky feel that he must frighten people of his own country by making this ghost walk again. As for encirclement; well, we are all encircled, if we choose to look at the world that way. Surely the leaders of the Soviet Union, whose power is greater than ever before in Russian history, cannot have any real fear of encirclement. This again may be something which Mr. Vishinsky is talking about because of its effect on his own people; because of the desire of the ruling circles in Russia to hold these people together even if fears and suspicions must be manufactured for that purpose. It is an old device

in history. I cannot believe, however, that this state of mind will necessarily persist. We have heard on many occasions from Soviet delegates about the great progress that is being made within the Soviet Union. If these reports are true, we may hope Mr. Vishinsky and his colleagues will soon feel able to give up the business of telling their people that the rest of the world is determined to destroy them and that they will one day abandon their customary practice of picking and choosing blood-curdling stories and reports from the free western press for speeches in the United Nations and for circulation at home, in order to incite and frighten those who have no way of checking their accuracy or importance.

Let me conclude by quoting again from Mr. Vishinsky's remarks in the course of the present debate: "Each of us", he said, "has his own conceptions. But if we find no common ground for understanding, then of course co-operation is impossible. Is it possible to find such common ground? I submit that it is and I shall prove this, in connection with another important question which was raised here, the question of war and the question of the possible co-existence of systems with the possibility of their co-operation and of the statements of our great teachers Lenin and Stalin and the teachers of our teachers, Marx and Engels." This quotation represents the element in Mr. Vishinsky's many speeches which gives us some ground for hope. If this is what he and his government really believe, there will be a ready response from us and there is ground for hope. But this belief must be demonstrated in deeds; in the application of these principles to our mutual problems. We accept that test for ourselves. We demand its acceptance by others. We do not find such acceptance in the denunciatory Soviet resolution before us and in the violent speeches that have been made in support of it.

Above all, we ask the U.S.S.R. to keep its Cominform from attempting to overthrow by force other peoples' governments and institutions and we remind Mr. Vishinsky of his own words "ideological intervention is wont to become military."

That statement, Mr. President, is very true and it embodies the greatest threat to peace which now exists. The Anglo-American resolution lays down principles which, if implemented, will lessen that threat and the Canadian Delegation therefore supports it and will vote for it.

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