

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES



INFORMATION DIVISION
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Statement by Mr. L.B. Pearson, Secretary of State for External Affairs, delivered at the Federal-Provincial Conference in Ottawa, on December 4, 1950.

The vital question at the present time, transcending immeasurably all other questions, is how great is the risk of a major war. At this particular moment, with developments in Korea and at the United Nations in a state of flux, it is particularly difficult to discuss this question with any degree of assurance or certainty. If hostilities cannot be localized in North Korea and if the fighting spreads over the border into Manchuria, the result may be an open war with the whole of Communist China. It is, furthermore, only safe to assume that Peking has risked armed intervention in Korea on the basis of assurances of assistance from the Soviet Union if the intervention should lead to military operations against the territory of China itself.

Therefore, a war with China might well result in Soviet assistance to the Chinese forces. The assistance might initially be indirect and "voluntary"; of a kind which the Chinese Communists claim they are giving North Korea and which could later be said not to constitute official intervention. But just as this kind of Chinese intervention in Korea has led to the danger of an open war with China, so similar Soviet intervention on behalf of China might lead to open war with the Soviet Union. It is to be hoped that the autocrats of the Kremlin understand this danger as well as we do.

At the moment, the focus of our hopes and fears is Korea. We must strive to find a solution to the grave and menacing problem that has arisen there. This will be no easy task. Before it can be done, moreover, there must be a stabilization of the military front in Korea on a line which can be firmly held. Our military advice gives us reason to hope that in spite of heavy initial losses before the counter-offensive from the North, such a line can be established and maintained.

When this has been done, we can then see where we are, in regard to the political aspects of the Korean and Far Eastern questions. The Chinese Communists have now made it abundantly clear that they regard United Nations action in Korea as something that menaces their interests so greatly that they are willing to risk a general war in challenging it. Therefore, as soon as circumstances make it possible, we must take up again the effort to reconcile on the one hand the determination of the United Nations to resist aggression, and on the other whatever legitimate interests the Chinese may have in the future of Korea and

the adjacent area. I am not sure that we can reconcile these two - our interest in world peace with the purposes behind their intervention - but we must try; and we must try by some more practical and effective means than mere public statements of good intentions and pious hopes.

During this period, when the peace of the world will be in balance, and when we shall be walking on the edge of a volcano which is rumbling alarmingly, we must not look for easy and spectacular results. We must realize that the Chinese Communist leaders, schooled in the tactics of public abuse which have long been part of the Soviet method of diplomacy, many of them completely ignorant of the Western world, are not likely to give us visible or audible help - will, in fact, make our task harder by vilifying us with scorn and slander and misrepresentation. But we need not give way to despair or to a fatalistic acceptance of something that is regarded as inevitable, and about which, therefore, nothing can be done, except to arm.

There is no reason, on the side of the free democracies, why the efforts which are now being made through the United Nations to localize and then end the war in Korea, should not succeed. We must, therefore, make it crystal clear - by our words and, more important, by our policies - that if they do not succeed, the responsibility will lie where it belongs; in Peking and in Moscow.

If, as we trust, these efforts do succeed, the immediate danger of a Third World War would, for the moment, be removed. That would not, however, mean that we could rule out of calculation the possibility of such a war breaking out later. The materials for a fire would still be there; and there would still be madmen about, with matches.

The Soviet Union already possesses the capability to wage a major war at any time. Its policies, moreover, show that it is willing to take the risk of provoking one, even though it may not deliberately desire one. At the present time, the Soviet Union possesses a great preponderance of power on land. On the sea it would be able seriously to interrupt allied lines of communication by the use of its submarine fleet, and by other means. The greatest military weaknesses of the Soviet Union are in the air and in its relative deficiency in atomic bombs. The Soviet Union would probably wish to reach a higher degree of preparedness, especially for air and atomic warfare and to augment its economic potential, before becoming engaged in hostilities. The possibility that this cautious and delaying attitude is the basis of Soviet foreign policy must be weighed against the temptation to take advantage of the passing opportunity offered by relative Western weakness; against the apparent willingness of the U.S.S.R. to take chances which may lead to war, and against the bellicose and inflammatory tactics of the Cominform.

These tactics, leading to aggressive war in Korea, as well as the expansionist nature of Soviet foreign policy generally, provide an incentive, and a necessity, for western re-armament and closer co-operation. The effect of this re-armament will become increasingly

important after 1951. If, therefore, the leaders of international communism have convinced themselves that war with the West must come at some time, they may consider that their best opportunity will be in the months ahead. Because of this - and because of recent events in North Korea - the danger of a major war in the immediate future has, I think, increased. Such a war could result either through deliberate armed aggressive action on the part of the Soviet Union, or its satellites, or through a willingness on their part to take increased risks in spite of the knowledge that a major war might result.

The question whether the risk of a major war will diminish after, say, the end of 1951, depends, of course, in large part on whether the Western world has been able to increase its defences and ensure the necessary unity of action; whether we can strengthen - as we are trying to do - the United Nations as an agency for preserving peace, for settling disputes and in the last analysis for organizing collective force against an aggressor. The free democracies are now taking steps to these ends at Lake Success and within the North Atlantic Organization. The crisis of the last few weeks in Korea has shown, with even greater clarity than before, the necessity for doing this and for doing it quickly and effectively.

The democratic world is - tragically but inescapably - compelled to devote an increasing proportion of its resources to the task of rearmament. This rearmament is essential and must be given priority for the time being over other objectives, but by itself, it will not be enough. We must also preserve and increase our economic and social strength. We must also take the steps necessary to rally to our side the peoples of Asia. We must give political and moral leadership of a kind which will attract and hold the support of the wavering powers, especially in Asia. Otherwise the Soviet Union may be able to extend by non-military means, by the pull of its sham but alluring offers of bread with freedom, its domination over large parts of the under-privileged, under-developed world with its masses of millions.

The forces of communist aggression in Asia have in the past successfully allied themselves with the forces of national liberation and social reform. The task of the Western democratic powers is to assist the democratic governments in those areas to break that unnatural alliance. For this purpose, it is essential that the Western countries help the Asian democratic countries in their plans for economic development, in order to relieve the distress and poverty there, on which international communism feeds. Within the measure of its resources Canada should, I think, do its part to help in this great effort to promote human welfare and hence to ensure peace.

There is some discussion going on at present whether the atom bomb should or should not be used against the aggressors in Korea. One consideration in this matter - and an important one - must be the effect of such use on the relations of the Western world with Asia. The military, and others, may argue that the atomic bomb is just another weapon. But, in the minds of ordinary people

everywhere in the world, it is far more than that, and its use has acquired an immensely greater significance than any other aspect of war. The anxiety with which the possibility of such use is regarded has been strikingly and increasingly evident of late among our friends in Europe and in Asia. This anxiety is, I think, the main reason for the appeal, even in free countries, of the cynical communist "peace" campaign.

It would be hard to exaggerate the psychological and political consequences of the employment of the bomb, or the threat of its employment, in the present critical situation. The strategic use of the bomb against Chinese cities might conceivably reverse the course of military events in Korea now, but at the cost, possibly, of destroying the cohesion and unity of purpose of the Atlantic community. Certainly its use for a second time against an Asian people would dangerously weaken the links that remain between the Western world and the peoples of the East.

The atomic bomb is the most powerful deterrent element in the arsenal of the free world. But it is universally regarded as the ultimate weapon. It should be treated as such.

There has, of course, been a mass intervention of the Chinese Communists in Korea. In the present critical military situation, those who have their own forces engaged (and this applies, of course, particularly to the United States whose intrepid men are bearing the brunt of this fight) are obviously entitled to have full consideration given to the use of every available means of supporting the ground forces fighting under the United Nations Command. This is natural and inevitable. But, before a decision of such immense and awful consequence, for all of us, is taken, there should surely be consultation through the U.N., particularly with the governments principally concerned. One of those would be the Canadian Government, which has from the beginning been a partner in the tri-partite development of atomic energy.

It is of supreme importance to the morale and survival of the free peoples that, if war comes, the responsibility should be clearly and inexorably fixed. While there is any chance at all of preventing an extension of the present hostilities, the advantages of using the bomb, or even threatening its use, are, I think, likely to be far outweighed by the reactions among the peoples of the world, and especially the peoples of Asia, which would follow that use.

In the confused and dangerous international situation of today, it is essential to try to see the world steadily, realistically, and as a whole. The obvious Soviet game is to provoke incidents and tensions at various points on the borderlands between the Western world and the Soviet Union and to try to lead us into the trap of concentrating too great a proportion of our limited resources on one or two isolated border points. It is clear that the communists are trying to lead us into this trap in Korea. In order to fight the present war in Korea a large part of the immediately available forces of the West have been committed to that country. If the war in Korea should become a war against China -

and I repeat we must do everything within the power of statesmanship to prevent this - it will be difficult to avoid committing an even larger part of Western resources to that war. This would mean that we would be leaving exposed our most important and, in the long run, our most dangerous front, which remains Western Europe. That is still the part of the world where we must concentrate our main effort, on building up substantial defensive strength under the collective control of the members of the North Atlantic Pact, who are slowly but surely building the structure of a North Atlantic community - on political, economic, military and social foundations.

At present, the increasing power of that community is the greatest deterrent to war. Canada must, in its own interests, and for its own security, but in a way consistent with our position, our size and our special problems as a young and developing country, make an appropriate contribution to that collective strength.

By standing firm and strong against aggression in Western Europe, and by assisting in the struggle of the Asian people to a better life, the free Western democracies can best ensure the kind of peaceful and co-operating world which is the sole objective of their foreign policies.

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