



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 51/25 THE PARTNERSHIP TO UPHOLD FREEDOM

Commencement Address by the Prime Minister of Canada, Mr. L.S. St. Laurent, delivered at Northwestern University, at Evanston, Ill., on June 11, 1951.

What I am going to talk to you about is something which is ... urgent for all of us in both countries to be thinking about. That something is the partnership in which we and a group of other free nations are jointly engaged for the purpose of upholding freedom in the world.

A hundred years ago, at the time this University was founded, the United States was entering upon one of the most difficult periods in the history of this country. For something over half a century your forebears had maintained, within this nation, an uneasy balance between two very different conceptions of human society, one insisting on human equality and the other tolerating human slavery. By 1851 it was becoming clear to most Americans both in the North and the South that this uneasy balance could not be maintained indefinitely. Unless a way of life based on either freedom or slavery was accepted as the rule throughout the whole nation, it was apparent the nation itself would not survive.

During the first decade of the history of Northwestern University it was the supreme aim of American statesmanship to find a peaceful solution to that problem of national survival. Unhappily a peaceful solution was not found.

The American people had to wage a terrible civil war to maintain their unity as a nation. Whether greater statesmanship could have settled that issue without war is now an academic question and I am not going to try to answer it. But I am sure almost no one would quarrel with the assertion that slavery was bound to be abandoned sooner or later and that if slavery could have been extinguished without war, it would have been a great gain for the United States and a great gain for the human race.

The human race today faces a situation which in some respects is similar to the one this nation faced a century ago. The existence of this nation, like other free nations, is in danger; and the danger is one we are trying to overcome without a great war.

But the problem is no longer an exclusively American problem. On one side is Communist imperialism striving for the total enslavement of the whole world; on the other is a partnership of the free nations striving to maintain the freedom we believe to be the very essence of civilized life. At present there is an uneasy balance between the two. Of course, such a balance cannot be maintained indefinitely.

Sooner or later, we must have a free world or what we will have is a world in chains. But, for the time being, I believe the first task of statesmanship is to maintain that balance, though it should be our supreme aim to try by every honourable means, to ensure the ultimate peaceful triumph of freedom in the world.

Now it is hardly possible to exaggerate the difficulty of achieving that aim. To succeed we, in the free world, have to create now, and then to maintain, military strength too substantial for our opponents to dare challenge it with any prospect of final victory.

At the same time we must continue to develop our free way of life and to demonstrate its superiority, not only for the favoured peoples of the western world, but also for those countless millions in other continents who are confused and uncertain in the present situation. And while that is being done we are also faced with the problem of living in one world with the great nations behind the iron curtain where long years of intellectual, social and political servitude have undermined the aptitude and perhaps even the desire of many for what we regard as freedom.

I say this is a hard programme. It is the most forbidding prospect which has faced any generation since our European ancestors first settled in the new world. One reason it is hard is that we cannot expect, and indeed, we dare not even hope for quick results.

There is no short and easy way to make the world free or even to make our own freedom secure. It may well be that the greatest of all the dangers we face - greater even than the danger from Russia or from China - is the danger of listening to those who think they have a quick and easy solution to this terribly difficult problem.

There is a great temptation to say: Communist imperialism is an evil thing bent on extinguishing freedom in the world. Let us extinguish it first. Let us get it over with. That temptation will grow greater as the military strength of the free world increases.

This danger is all the greater because acts of Communist aggression like that we are now opposing in Korea inevitably arouse strong feelings and a natural inclination to use our growing strength to hit back at the very source of the trouble.

But statesmanship does not consist in yielding to impulses, however righteous, without reckoning the consequences. To hit back now at the source of the trouble is to start a world war. And that is what we are trying to prevent.

Ambassador Philip Jessup has said that "the United States will fight, if necessary, to preserve freedom and justice, but it will not make war merely because the road to peace is inevitably long and hard and tiresome". That I believe is the right attitude for all free nations.

Now I am personally convinced that our greater industrial strength, our greater initiative and know-how and the greater moral resources of free peoples would enable us to win a world war if such a war got started. But I am just as firmly convinced that the wholesale and appalling destruction of human lives and - perhaps even worse - of the

institutions of civilization so patiently built up over the centuries, would set back human progress for generations, and possibly for centuries. There is no doubt we would face even these terrible consequences rather than accept the living death of world domination by Communist imperialism.

But our real aim must be to prevent either of these catastrophes. To do so we must build up and sustain the strength of the free world and maintain a fundamental unity of purpose among the free nations. That unity of aim and purpose must be strong enough to contain honest differences about means and methods and to permit us to resolve those differences by the give and take of discussion and negotiation.

No one country, not even the United States with all its power and all its wealth, can by itself alone provide for its security.

On the other hand, all the free nations everywhere recognize that there can be no security for any of them without the leadership of the United States.

In a very real sense, we do live in a two power world - the world of the free and the world of the subjected. That fact provides the Communist propagandists with one of their most effective weapons in the war of ideas. Fellow-travellers of Moscow - some of them possibly honest but very short-sighted pacifists - are peddling all around the globe their legend of a different kind of two-power world; one in which they claim there are two rival centres of imperialistic expansion. According to them, the Soviet Union and the United States are waging a gigantic struggle for world domination. These Communist fellow-travellers assert that both these powers are equally ruthless, equally unscrupulous, that both constitute the same terrifying threat to the real freedom of other nations; and they suggest that the part of wisdom for other nations is to stand aside from the struggle and let the imperialist giants destroy each other's over-ambitious plans.

This proposition no doubt sounds as absurd to you as it does to me. And yet it would be a great mistake to think this myth does not appeal to many people in the free world who would be quite impervious to the direct appeal of Communism.

Now it seems to me that the very existence of Canada as an independent nation is the best of all demonstrations, an actual living demonstration of the falsity of that proposition.

Two months ago we had a visit in our national capital, as you had in yours, from the President of the French Republic. I had the honour of introducing the President to the Members of the two Houses of our Parliament. In introducing him, I used some words which I should like to repeat to you this morning. This is what I said:

"You come to us, sir, after spending a few days in the United States of America. You cannot fail to have been impressed by the strength of that great country, and also by the sincerity of the peaceful aspirations of all its people. Here in Canada you will not fail to note the close, friendly relations which bind us to our southern neighbours, and also the untrammelled independence we enjoy in our own land. If our frontiers bordered on those of some grasping imperialistic neighbouring state, we might not

have this opportunity of welcoming you in a free parliament as the distinguished and respected head of a free France. Canada is, I think, the best evidence, permanent and historic evidence, of the peaceful purposes of the United States.

"These confident, friendly and co-operative international relations which we enjoy with our great southern neighbours, we wish to share ultimately with the whole world, and in the meantime we expect to share them with all the nations of North Atlantic community."

In the North Atlantic alliance, and in the resistance we are offering to aggression under the flag of the United Nations in Korea, the United States and Canada are engaged with a number of other nations in a partnership not to dominate others, but to uphold freedom in the world. In that partnership history and geography have combined to make the United States, inevitably, the predominant partner.

Of course, the success of any partnership depends upon the understanding and good will of the partners towards one another. In every successful partnership, each of the partners has to be prepared to overlook what he may regard as imperfections and shortcomings in the other partners, and to make the best of what each is able to do. This partnership is no exception. It would be easy at times to get worked up about whether others are doing their full share; but that, I am sure, would be the quickest way to destroy the common effort.

We must recognize that the very essence of freedom is variety and that, even in a partnership, free nations cannot be expected, all of them, to make their efforts in the same way nor to use the same methods. We in North America are so much more fortunate, in a material sense, than other nations that we must expect to contribute more proportionately from our abundance than can be expected from those of our partners who are still recovering from the dislocation and destruction of the last war which affected them much more deeply than it affected us.

We must realize, too, that even with a maximum of good-will the partners in an alliance like ours can never be expected to see eye to eye on every question that arises. There will inevitably be differences, debates, perhaps even misunderstandings.

Our Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs said in a recent speech about Canada and the United States: "We have the right to disagree, as friends. We also have the obligation to resolve these disagreements, as friends, and with a minimum of fuss and disturbance. This has not always been easy in the past, and is not going to be always easy in the days ahead, but our friendship will, I know, stand the challenge of the trials and turmoil of our time."

As Mr. Pearson said, there is no question that the friendship of Canada and the United States will stand that challenge. But we must take even greater care to see that the wider partnership of the free nations is able to meet the challenge of these difficult times. Because there are bound to be some, in every country who, from time to time, will say it is better to go it alone and take the consequences. That, I believe, is another of the great dangers to our partnership for freedom.

Still another danger is the danger of thinking the free nations can make themselves secure through military strength alone. Don't mistake me. It is indispensable to create sufficient military strength to remove the prospects of successful aggression. But we are not merely facing a test of material strength. We are also engaged in a struggle for men's minds, and, in that struggle, military strength is only one of the elements. We must re-arm, but we must also find the means to maintain and develop the measure of social justice we have already achieved in our own countries, and we must continue to work for the extension beyond our countries of that basic human equality which is the hallmark of a genuinely free society.

All thoughtful people recognize the potential value to our partnership of the vast industrial capital and the skilled manpower of Western Europe which might well be decisive in turning the balance if war came. But we cannot afford to overlook, either, those vast areas in Asia and in Africa, and even in parts of this hemisphere, where under existing economic conditions mass poverty prevails and where it is quite useless to preach the abstract advantages of freedom to men and women who are starving or half-starved.

To these unfortunate peoples, Communism has an obvious appeal. The Communist doctrine of an economic and social revolution for the benefit of the masses has been just as potent a weapon in this so-called cold war as the subversive fifth column or the shadow of the Red Army. A defensive effort designed only to safeguard the material and moral advantages enjoyed by the inhabitants of this continent and of Western Europe will not give us the security we want. It is the essential first step. But if we hope to provide enduring safeguards of those moral and material advantages we must, in a true spirit of equality and co-operation, join with the less favoured areas of the world in a concerted effort to give their inhabitants greater material advantages and greater hopes for the future.

To strive to do all these things I have been suggesting, and to keep on striving to do them over even a generation or two, may seem to many of us a grim and uninviting prospect. Some of you are probably asking yourself: When can we hope to get back to normal? When can we return to living decent American lives without having to worry about the problems of the rest of the human race? Well, I am afraid the answer to those questions is: Not in my day nor in yours.

The United States today, the whole North American continent today, is directly concerned about what is happening in the rest of the world. What is even more important, the United States is, I repeat, inevitably the dominant factor in the free world. On your course as a nation, the fate of all mankind largely depends. That is true whether we like it or not.

I am sure there are many Americans who would cheerfully sacrifice this new position of leadership in world affairs for the comfortable isolation of the years between your Civil War and the First World War. But, as a nation you have no such choice. The only choice before you and before us is a choice between wise, patient and intelligent leadership of the free world by the United States, or a rapid shrinkage of the circumferences of free peoples, as your own and our lights of freedom grow dimmer and dimmer.

I think I am right about these alternatives and I know we can be confident about the leadership of the United States. Of course, there are some even in Canada who do not always understand the way your public affairs are managed, and who are anxious at times about what is going to be done next.

No doubt too some of you have periods when you wonder to what extent all your partners can really be depended upon. As I said before, there are in this country and in all free countries some voices preaching what seem to others to be strange doctrines and some who are always painting even stranger pictures of other nations.

But at every crisis in your affairs, you in the United States have shown yourselves capable of mobilizing great moral and material resources to uphold freedom. That has happened more than once to meet situations within your own country. Twice in our generation you have done it to uphold freedom in the world at large. Now never before, not even in 1861 or in 1941, has your role been so decisive or your leadership so important. We in Canada, who are your closest neighbours, know that you have never, in any crisis, failed to uphold the freedom which this nation was founded to preserve. We know you will not fail in this crisis to give our partnership the leadership it must have to uphold the freedom of mankind.

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