



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION  
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No. 50/44 Statement on the Soviet Peace Resolution by Mr. L.B. Pearson, Secretary of State for External Affairs and Chairman of the Canadian Delegation to the United Nations General Assembly, made in the First (Political) Committee on October 30, 1950.

We are now nearing the end of what is becoming an annual occurrence at the Assembly - a general debate on the essentials of peace. I doubt whether these debates contribute much, if anything, to peace; or the resolutions which emerge from them and which will inevitably tend to repeat themselves, from year to year. It may, in fact, be argued that these discussions, by underlining and exaggerating differences, by the violence of the language used, create an atmosphere which makes peace more difficult. Headline diplomacy is not the best way to settle differences, especially when the headlines reproduce such Soviet phrases as "unbridled slanders", "dirty insinuations", "nonsensical babbling", "maddened yelps of warmongers". I have my own peace proposal to make. It is a two-year moratorium on bellicose and violent speeches about peace at the United Nations, and a two-year attempt to do something effectively about peace.

The Soviet Resolution contains an appeal to the permanent members of the Security Council to work for peace and to conclude a pact. While we must be, of course, in favour of renewed effort to reach agreement by every form of consultation, we should not forget that peace lies not primarily in pacts, but in the hearts of men and the policies of states.

In this matter of consultation as in other matters, we should come down out of the clouds and face certain hard facts. What kind of consultations are envisaged? Experience has shown that some forms may accomplish nothing. Indeed, they may do more harm than good by raising hopes that are later dashed and by creating despair out of failure of great expectations.

If international discussions on political problems are not carefully prepared, and the preliminary diplomatic work not thoroughly done, they may merely underline and exacerbate disagreement and leave the position afterwards worse than before.

We think that these considerations apply with particular force to consultation with the Soviet Union. We look back upon a long series of sterile discussions and negotiations with the Soviet Union in almost every international forum, whether it be the Security Council, the Council of Foreign Ministers, the Control Commission for Germany, the Far Eastern Commission, or any other body in which Soviet foreign policy has confronted all our efforts at compromise with a resolute and resounding "nyet".

I venture, therefore, to suggest a few criteria which must be fulfilled before there can be any hope whatever that such talks would lead to anything. In the first place there must be a sound basis for consultation agreed on in advance. There is not, for instance, such a basis when the Soviet Union proposes, as it recently has at the meeting in Prague, that the representatives of eighteen million Germans, chosen arbitrarily by a Communist machine, should be considered on an equality with the democratically-chosen representatives of forty-five million Western Germans.

In the second place, there must be a real willingness to compromise and a genuine desire to find just solutions to problems. This does not mean that if one party does not get its own way from the very start, it is entitled to apply the methods of a Berlin blockade.

In the third place, the consultations must not be simply occasions for propaganda where one party harangues audiences outside the Council chamber and publishes in its own press truncated and distorted versions of what took place.

In the fourth place, no agreement between the Great Powers must be at the expense of the interests and freedoms of other nations which are not represented.

Above all, we must not allow talk to become the delaying substitute for agreement. And we must not forget that peace talks - in an atmosphere of dissension and distrust - may encourage the foes of peace by disarming mentally, morally and physically those who believe in peace and desire to defend it.

Therefore, it seems to me that the prerequisite for fruitful consultation is some action which would increase international confidence, something that would make the international climate a little less frigid, so that this delicate peace plant may have a chance to grow. Otherwise, we would be wasting our time over talks. If this debate has shown nothing else, it has shown that. It has also shown how tragically wide is the gulf that divides the two worlds, and how deep the fear that prevents that gulf being bridged.

Mr. Vishinsky, speaking the other day, if I may adopt a favourite expression of his, "on behalf of the ruling circles" of the Soviet Union, pins the responsibility for all this fear and division on the United States, the leader of what he calls the Anglo-American bloc. To support this charge, again to use some of his own adjectives, "this monstrous, slanderous" charge, he produced the usual newspaper and magazine reports of speeches and statements by Americans. This device has long since ceased to be convincing. Just as much of the historical and political evidence adduced in these debates by Mr. Vishinsky and his friends is, again to use his words, "a crude distortion and falsification of fact", so also their press clippings and magazine articles give a grossly distorted impression of the people and policies of this country. This is a free country, and if some person makes a fool of himself in a university, or even in Congress, there are a thousand to tell him so in language that is almost as strong as Mr. Vishinsky's. It is, of course, difficult for persons brought up in a totalitarian police state, where dissent is heresy to be liquidated at any price, to understand this simple but basic fact.

The truth is that the nations of the world outside the Soviet bloc know that the power of the United States will not be

used for purposes of aggressive war. They know that the policies of the United States - though we may not always support them, or even approve them - are not designed to lead to war. If they were, they would soon isolate this country from the rest of the free world.

We judge the United States as it would wish to be judged, not by Mr. Vishinsky's press clippings, but by its actions, as indeed we will judge the policy of the U.S.S.R. when the United States withdraws its victorious forces from Korea as soon as peace has been restored. Will Mr. Vishinsky accept this fact as at least one piece of evidence that America is not trying to dominate the world?

We in Canada know this country and its people well. We know them as good neighbours who respect the rights of others; who don't ask for or get automatic support from smaller countries through pressure or threats or promises. We know that they accept the fact that co-operation between large and smaller countries can only exist on a basis of mutual confidence and mutual respect. If the Soviet government would permit its people to learn the truth about the United States instead of filling them with information only about the worst features of its life and culture, they would make a real contribution to the removal of that fear, which is at present being instilled, directly and deliberately, in the minds and hearts of the Soviet people. Mr. Vishinsky asks, "Have we no right to criticize western culture", and again, "We ask only the right to base our education on love for our own national culture and national dignity, the same as others. Slavish worship of other countries is not admissible". No one takes any exception to that, but slavish vilification of other countries is also not admissible, and we have much evidence that this is the foundation of Soviet education; it is one of the things that makes us fear Soviet policy most; it is one of the worst forms of warmongering, this implanting of fear and hatred of one people in the minds of another. Has the citizen of any Communist state the opportunity to get an unbiased picture of the western world; of its way of life, of what it tried to do in the defeat of Nazism, and what it tried to do in the relief and reconstruction of devastated areas after the war? Just one small example of what I mean, given because Mr. Vishinsky complained on Saturday that our evidence was old or out of date. The Polish delegation circulated a handsome illustrated booklet last week on the reconstruction and rebuilding of Warsaw, an achievement which is a magnificent tribute to the energy, zeal and devotion of the Polish people. This booklet, in its foreword, saw fit to mention what Russia had contributed to this rebuilding, but could not find room for one word about UNRRA, which had done so much fine work in Poland, made possible, largely, by the characteristic generosity of the people of this country. Incidentally, the booklet also referred to the Polish Government in exile in London during the war, which had under its authority those gallant Polish soldiers who fought so heroically alongside Canadians in Italy and in Western Europe, as "that criminal band of Polish reactionaries". This is only a minor example, but a very recent one, of the kind of vilification and distortion which brings despair to those who realize that there can be no peace as long as a great gulf of misunderstanding and suspicion exists between the two worlds. All that this kind of thing can do is widen the gulf and bring fear to those on our side of it, fear that this animosity which is being encouraged can only result in conflict. That fear is increased when we read that a primary school text book used in the U.S.S.R. has this to say - to children - about those who live under our system:

"Under capitalism where the relationship is built on the principle of wolf to wolf; venality, hypocrisy, lying, deceit, cunning, treachery, bigotry...are the characteristics of the bourgeois representative."

What a foundation for good understanding! Possibly Mr. Vishinsky would put the author of that text book - who presumably wrote it under orders from the Soviet Government - in the same category of mad persons to which on Saturday he consigned the President of Tampa University.

But Mr. Vishinsky says we have nothing to fear from Soviet policy; that facts have proven its unswerving adherence to the cause of peace and international co-operation over the years; that we have nothing to fear from communist ideology, which rests on not only the possibility, but the necessity of the peaceful co-existence of the capitalist and communist systems. Because of this, Mr. Vishinsky argues that we should not be rearming. Therefore, as we insist on doing this, ipso facto, we have war-like aggressive aims. It's a simple thesis, but a completely false one.

When Mr. Vishinsky talks about the peaceful aims of communism and Soviet policy, we remain sceptical, and we find most of his evidence to support his case false and misleading. On our side, we have lots of concrete evidence to support the other view, of the aggressive, expansionist, war-like aims of Soviet and international communist policy.

But let the facts speak for themselves. Let the map of Eastern Europe speak, let the thousands of exiles from countries that have lost their freedom speak; certainly those that are dead and in Siberia cannot speak. Let the Soviet 170 divisions and 30,000 tanks speak, confronted as they are by the few half-armed divisions in Western Europe. Let Yugoslavia, which knows something of Soviet policy and methods, and peace appeals, speak!

There is no point in recapitulating here the evidence which, as we see it, disproves the legend of the peaceful, lamb-like character of Soviet foreign policy. I can assure the representatives of the Communist states that this policy has inspired a genuine and terrible fear of war in the people of non-Communist states throughout the world. If something can be done to remove that fear, or to prove by deeds, not by words, that it is unfounded, then a great and crushing weight of dread will have been lifted from our hearts and minds. Then and only then can we begin to beat our tanks into television sets, something that every taxpayer in every country is only too anxious to do.

Mr. Vishinsky also pours scorn on the idea, which we hold, that international communism could hold any danger for the rest of us. I hope he is right, but here again the balance of evidence is against him. We have seen in our own countries how the communist organizations slavishly and unswervingly follow the twists and turns of Soviet policy - even when they involve a double back somersault - in a way which makes Mr. Vishinsky's statement that the U.S.S.R. is not responsible for the Comintern or Cominform, as absurd to us as it must be to him. The best example, of course, is World War II. Until 1941, it was an unjust imperialist war and we who were fighting the Fascists were called the aggressors. Listen to what Molotov said in October 1939, in condemning the British and the French for continuing the war against Nazism:

"As with any other ideological system, one may accept or reject the ideology of Hitlerism - that is a matter of political views. But everyone will understand that an ideology cannot be destroyed by force, that it cannot be eliminated by war. It is therefore not only senseless, but criminal to wage such a war - a war for the 'destruction of Hitlerism', camouflaged as a fight for 'democracy'."

But suddenly in June 1941, it became a war for democracy and the liberation of enslaved people.

It is this kind of thing, repeated ad infinitum, by Communists all over the world, which has convinced us that international communism has become the tool of Soviet foreign policy, and is a menace to our security. Our fears are not removed by quotations from interviews given by Mr. Stalin to Western journalists about the pacific character of communism. We can match every one of those with a dozen which prove the opposite, from Lenin and from Stalin, and from other lesser leaders. There is that famous one of Lenin's:

"As long as capitalism and socialism exist, we cannot live in peace; in the end, one or the other will triumph - a funeral dirge will be sung over the Soviet Republic or over world capitalism."

These are not, as Mr. Vishinsky complains, contemporary statements, but the bible - which I take it in Russia consists of the sayings of Lenin and Stalin, is never out of date.

However, as Lenin himself once wrote:

"In view of the extreme complexity of social phenomena it is always easy to select any number of examples or separate data to prove any point one desires."

So here again we will await with eagerness, if with some caution, not words, but actions which will prove in the days ahead that communism on the one hand and capitalism or democratic socialism on the other can, like the lion and the lamb, lie down together, and rise later without one being inside the other.

Meanwhile, the free democracies are determined not to be deflected from their resolve to become stronger, not for aggressive purposes, not in order to force, at the point of the atom bomb, diplomatic decisions on the Soviet Union, but because they fear aggression and wish to put collective force behind their will for peace in order to deter and prevent it; because negotiations for peace have a better chance of succeeding if the parties, not accepting each other's views, respect at least each other's strength. Permanent peace can, of course, never be ensured by power alone; but power on both sides, not merely on one, may give a breathing space in which to pause, reflect and improve relations. This course will be attacked as power politics, but power politics are often merely the politics of not being over-powered. So it is in this case.

The Soviet resolution objects to this. It says disarm now, at once, by one-third. That point has already been suitably disposed of by previous speakers. I would merely ask one question. In any disarmament convention, would the Soviet government agree that the United Nations agency set up by the Convention should have the right to go anywhere, at any time, to ascertain, by

its own methods, whether a state was, in fact, carrying out its obligations under the Convention. This is quite a different matter than promising to supply the United Nations with all relevant information, but unless it were accepted, no one in the present state of international relations would believe that a disarmament pledge was, in fact, being carried out. If the contrary were true, and we could merely accept each other's word, then trust and confidence would be so great that we wouldn't need any disarmament Convention at all.

There is a special form of disarmament referred to in the Soviet resolution, the prohibition of the use of atomic energy for war.

There will be an opportunity later to discuss this vital question in greater detail, but I would like to say a few words about it now, as Mr. Vishinsky dealt with it at some length on Saturday, when he misinterpreted, and thereby misrepresented, the plan for atomic disarmament, which has been approved by the vast majority of the members of the United Nations. He attempted to show that the principle of international ownership of atomic facilities, or international trusteeship, as it really is, would give the United Nations atomic agency "complete unbridled power", that it was designed solely to further the interests of United States monopolies; not merely to limit, but to destroy completely national sovereignty. That is a completely false picture of the meaning and motives of international atomic trusteeship, just as the picture of the Soviet Union as the last-ditch defence of the sovereignty of small nations, including, presumably, Yugoslavia, is false to the point of being ludicrous. How false it is can, and no doubt will, be shown by chapter and verse in our later discussions on this subject.

Mr. Vishinsky has also stated in emphatic, if somewhat ambiguous, terms, the Soviet view on inspection and control.

We all seem to agree now that there must be effective inspection and control. We should surely also be able to agree that once we have a satisfactory international convention which embodies these principles, atomic war must be prohibited. Aggressive war is, of course, the supreme crime, but there should be a defence against that crime which would make atomic warfare unnecessary and therefore criminal; which would make it possible to abolish the atom bomb before it abolishes us.

This can be done as soon as we have an international convention in effect. But that will not happen unless the convention has fool-proof provisions to ensure that the obligations undertaken are being carried out, and until the machinery for that purpose - United Nations machinery - is actually in operation. Mr. Vishinsky has recently tried to remove our doubts on one aspect, but only one aspect of this control, namely inspection. I would like to ask him this simple question. Does the U.S.S.R. admit that any international agreement should include among its provisions - again let me emphasize the word "include" (for inspection itself is not enough) - should include provisions for a strict system of international inspection by which the officials of the international authority would have the right, at any time and with or without consent of the state concerned (a) of continuous inspection of any atomic energy installation or atomic plants of any kind whatever, and (b) to search, by any means, including observation by air, for undeclared atomic energy facilities wherever the international control authority has any reason to believe they exist. This atomic energy question of such critical importance to the fate of the whole world should be given further and urgent examination

by the Atomic Energy Commission, to see if the gap between the two positions can be narrowed or even closed. The possibility of such examination was removed, however, when the Soviet representative walked out of that Commission on a totally irrelevant issue. One test of Soviet good faith in this matter would be its willingness to walk back again.

The Soviet delegate has recently stated - more than once - to the Committee that his country sincerely desires to cooperate with all states through the United Nations, with a view to strengthening the prospects for peace. All men of good will everywhere must welcome that statement.

Such a statement itself, however, will not remove the fear that overhangs the world today. Unlike the delegates of communist countries on this committee, I do not suggest that all on one side is perfect and all on the other is rotten; or that one side must take all the steps towards the reconciliation of opposing views.

I can, however, suggest two simple steps which, if they were taken by the Communist States - as they have long since been taken by us, would help remove our fears about the non co-operative basis of Soviet foreign policy and might thereby begin to establish that mutual confidence which is not completely lacking.

These steps would be:

(1) The Soviet Union should immediately join in the work of the United Nations specialized agencies devoted to such things as health, food and agriculture, instead of boycotting that work as at present. Also the Soviet Union - so rich and powerful - should bear its share of the burden of assistance to under-developed countries and of relief and rehabilitation in ravaged countries like Korea.

(2) The Soviet Union should cease the policy of isolating its people, its culture, its progress, from any contact with the non-communist world; should give its people an opportunity to learn for themselves that we are not all capitalist exploiters, imperialist warmongers, and gangsters; while we in our turn, should be given the opportunity to convince ourselves that the great, flourishing energies of the Soviet people are being solely devoted - as we are told - to the work of peaceful construction.

Progress in these matters would not itself be decisive in the cause of peace. But if we can make no progress here, what hope can we have for the solution of even more important problems.

If we can make this kind of progress, resolutions of the kind we are now considering will not be necessary. If we cannot, their passage or their rejection will not save us from that ultimate conflict which would be as unnecessary as it would be catastrophic.