

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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Statement by Mr. L.B. Pearson, Secretary of State for External Affairs, and Chairman of the Canadian Delegation to the United Nations, delivered to the Windsor Chamber of Commerce, and the Windsor United Nations Association, on November 15, 1950.

It is on the whole an encouraging report that I am able to bring you tonight from the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York. During the past two or three years, for reasons with which you are acquainted, the United Nations had fallen more and more into a position of ineffectiveness and weakness. Although it had a number of achievements to its credit, the irresponsible use of the veto by the Soviet Union in the Security Council had increasingly reduced to virtual impotence the powers of the organization to deal with threats to the peace. Since the central purpose of the United Nations was to preserve peace and security, this failure could not be balanced by successes in other fields of endeavour. Indeed it seemed that, unless the dispiriting course of events could be checked and reversed, the United Nations must, before very long, join the other hopeful initiatives for international co-operation which had been taken in the past and which had ended in disappointment and disillusionment.

Then came the attack on Korea; the crucial test of our world organization. Instead of succumbing to that test, the United Nations rallied in a remarkable way to confound the cynics and the pessimists who said that it could do nothing but talk; and pass resolutions of academic futility. The United Nations at that critical moment in June entered on a new and vigorous phase of its existence. The Security Council was hastily called and discharged its functions in the manner which had been intended when the Charter was drawn up. A United Nations Commander was appointed. Forces from a number of countries were supplied to assist United States troops who, with the forces of the Republic of Korea, had taken with courage and sacrifice the first onslaught of the invasion. And these United Nations forces were at length successful in driving the aggressors back over the 38th parallel and in breaking their strength in North Korea.

This recovery was as remarkable as it was heartening. But those who had watched it most closely and with most enthusiasm could not but be aware that the margin of safety had been perilously small. The United Nations, faced with this critical test presented by the attack on Korea, might easily have failed, and declined possibly permanently, into frustration and futility.

Since June, therefore, there has been a serious effort to examine the lessons which must be learned from the war in Korea if the United Nations is to be in a stronger position, in future, to meet similar crises. A careful diagnosis of the weaknesses of the organization has been conducted and some remedies have been prescribed.

The first lesson to be learned is that the Security Council, hampered as it is by the constant use of the veto by the Soviet Union, is an inadequate instrument with which to attempt to organize resistance to aggression. The Security Council was able to act effectively in June of this year only because of the accidental absence of the Soviet Representative, who had "walked out" in January over an entirely different issue. There can be no doubt that, but for his accidental absence, the Security Council would have been blocked on this occasion, as it had been in the past. It was therefore clear that some alternative method must be found for organizing collective security against attack, if and when the Security Council failed to discharge the responsibilities which had been given it under the Charter.

The diagnosis also revealed another important source of weakness. Those who drew up the Charter had proposed that military agreements should be negotiated between the United Nations and its member states which would provide national contingents to be at the call of the organization. These agreements, which were to be negotiated through the Military Staff Committee, had never been drawn up on account of the obstructive attitude of the Soviet Representatives in that Committee. As a result, when Korea was attacked, member states, particularly the smaller and middle powers, found themselves without military forces which could be used at once under the auspices of the United Nations to repel the aggressor. The Great Powers which have military responsibilities throughout the world and which, for that reason, have large forces at their disposal were in a position to act. They did so with courage and despatch; and we must acknowledge our debt to the United States especially for the valorous and vigorous way in which it shouldered its responsibilities. Smaller countries, however, like our own, do not wish to default on their share of collective action which may be necessary. But before Canada, and other countries like ours, can be in a position to contribute military force immediately and effectively towards defeating aggression in any far off part of the world, arrangements must be worked out within the United Nations so that we may know what is expected of us. The fact that this had not been done in the United Nations was the second source of weakness which the events of last June laid bare.

On the credit side, it must be noted that the action which the United Nations took against aggression in Korea was made much easier because of the presence in Korea of a United Nations Commission which was able to flash the news of the attack at once to the Secretary-General in an authoritative report. Their presence on the spot enabled the United Nations to cut short argument about the facts and to stigmatize the North Koreans as the aggressor on the basis of unimpeachable evidence.

Even this circumstance, however, was somewhat fortuitous. An act of aggression might easily have been committed against some other country, without a United Nations Commission being present to sift the evidence and report to the United Nations. Here was another weakness. It was important that action should be taken which would make permanent provision for United Nations observers to be on the spot whenever military attack was feared.

One other final lesson had been drawn from the war in Korea. The way in which so many nations supported the action of the Security Council in coming to the defence of the Republic of Korea and the military contributions which were made by a very large number of them proved that the free world had not lost faith in the United Nations and, indeed, was ready to provide it with those resources necessary if it were to fulfil its main function of maintaining peace and security.

The diagnosis having been conducted, it was necessary to administer remedies. This has been attempted - and I think with real success - in what is perhaps the most important resolution of this session of the General Assembly - the resolution entitled "Uniting for Peace", which secured the support of 52 out of the 60 states members of the United Nations. This resolution attempts, in a very skillful way, to remedy the various weaknesses in the organization which I have outlined. It provides, first of all, that, if the Security Council is unable to take action to organize resistance to aggression because of the veto, an emergency session of the General Assembly may be called at once so that the challenge may not go by default and the primary purpose of the organization, the preservation of peace, may still be achieved. Secondly, it establishes, on a permanent basis, a Peace Observation Commission, whose services may be used by any state which feels itself threatened by military attack. Perhaps, even more important, is the section in the resolution which recommends that each member of the United Nations should "maintain within its national armed forces, elements so trained and organized that they could promptly be made available for service as a United Nations unit or units upon recommendation of the General Assembly or the Security Council". This paragraph in the resolution contains, I think, the germ of an international police force. If a large number of the members of the United Nations accepts this recommendation, there will be scattered throughout the world national contingents which can quickly be brought together, under United Nations auspices, to do the bidding of the organization. I do not want to overstate the importance of this development. That will depend, in large measure, on the response made to the resolution in member states. We, in Canada, as you know, even before the passage of the resolution, had declared that the Canadian Special Force would be available to discharge our obligations under the United Nations Charter or under the North Atlantic Treaty. We hope that a large number of other states will take similar action. If that hope is justified, I believe that an important step forward will have been taken towards the creation of an international police force, which has for many years been recognized as indispensable for permanent security. That is the hope which now shines alluringly

before us and which has made the protracted and often wearisome deliberations of this session of the General Assembly immensely rewarding. We are beginning to organize force to back up the collective action and the collective conscience of the free world.

Pessimists and cynics had said that the United Nations could not act. The encouraging news which I have tonight is that the United Nations has acted. It has acted to defeat aggression in Korea and it has acted also to organize itself in such a way that other attacks may be similarly defeated.

In all this, there is real cause for satisfaction. But in the uncertainties of the moment, you will be as aware as I am that we have no reason for complacency. The risks remain frightening and the dangers are great. We must summon as much wisdom as we can to see that they are reduced to a minimum. For that purpose, it is necessary to recall what must be the end and object of the mobilization of force behind the United Nations. The first object is to deter aggression or to crush it speedily and completely if it breaks out. The second is to create those situations in which conciliation and negotiation can be successful. A few days ago, I ventured to suggest at Lake Success that there were too many warlike words about peace and not enough peaceful action to prevent war. But I would not like you to believe that I share the view that it is acts only which are real and that words must always be vain and profitless. Otherwise, I should hardly be addressing you tonight. Certainly none of us who inherit the traditions of the West can be contemptuous of words. And, indeed, our object in equipping the United Nations with force might almost be described as the creation of circumstances in which words and discussions can have their proper meaning and their full effect. When rightly used in negotiation, words are the medium for give and take, the means of reconciling various points of view honestly held by communities of different kinds which are yet prepared to treat among one another in good faith. To restore the validity of words, to make real and profitable negotiation once again possible, is one of our chief aims.

You will gather from this that I believe we still must cherish the hope that, in the fullness of time, it may be possible again to negotiate with the Soviet Union, if not with cordiality, at least with frankness and with some hope of reaching mutually acceptable arrangements. We have found, however, that it is useless to negotiate with the Communist imperialists unless we can lead from strength rather than weakness. We have found also that bargains struck with them under the latter circumstances are very seldom honoured. It is therefore necessary for us to see that the free world is strong, militarily, economically and socially. When that has been accomplished, it may be possible for negotiations to take place in which the words exchanged will have some reality.

In the meantime, our task must be difficult and precarious. We cannot slacken in building up our military force. Nor can we be blind to the malice and tyranny which lies at the core of the Soviet system. Nevertheless, we must not allow ourselves to become so intent on those pressing preoccupations that we overlook any opportunities

which may be presented for genuine, rather than spurious, agreement with the Soviet Union. When, with honeyed words perhaps, they make demands on us which would call for the sacrifice either of our own liberties or of the liberties of our friends, we must reject such dangerous overtures, firmly and decisively. At the same time, however, if those liberties are not called in question, we must continue to examine every proposal that is made on its merits and to reply with words of conciliation and reason. That may prove troublesome. It may even involve the risk that some of our people, of less steady nerves than others, may be tempted to relax from the effort of strengthening our military forces because they may be deluded into believing that lasting security is only around the corner. I do not believe, however, that the number of such waverers will be great. Canadians have enough stamina and intelligence to realize, I think, that we can, and we must, arm ourselves against any eventuality without, at the same time, blinkering our eyes to the possibility, at least in some spheres, of agreement and conciliation. Nevertheless, the period over which we will have to behave in this way may be long and strewn with emergencies, so that we will need steady nerves and high courage if we are to be successful. We must reject both the provokers and the appeasers.

During this period, we will have to watch with particular care those areas and countries which lie on a periphery of the free world and are most open to Soviet attack. The marches of the free world are obviously the most critical points. It is there that the two worlds rub together. Even when aggression is not threatened, there is bound to be a certain amount of friction and unease along these borders. I do not need to insist, I imagine, on our determination to help in defending these areas from unprovoked aggression. By now, that should be beyond question. At the same time, we must hope that those primarily responsible for safeguarding the security of such areas of the world should carry out their mission in as steady and unprovocative a way as possible. We should go about without chips on our shoulders or fire in our eyes! It is difficult to decide how far the fears which the Soviet Union and its satellites profess for the West are genuine and how far they are trumped up to cloak their own totalitarian designs. Mostly the latter, I suspect. But the information which reaches the Kremlin about the West comes, in so many cases, from sources tainted by the prejudices of Marxist orthodoxy that we cannot entirely rule out the possibility that some genuine fear does play a considerable part in the formulation of the policy of the Soviet Union and its satellites. This possibility should be especially borne in mind, I think, on any occasion when it is necessary to conduct defensive military operations close to the borders of Communist states. Here we should do what we can to reduce those fears to a minimum and to reassure bordering states that their legitimate interests will not be infringed. I have in mind, of course, particularly tonight the situation in North Korea, where United Nations Forces are operating very close to the borders of Manchuria and Siberia. The integrity of their frontiers are, of course, of concern to those two governments. They are also concerned about the safety of valuable installations lying along the border. Nothing therefore should be left undone which could help to convince them that those legitimate concerns will be

respected; even though in reverse circumstances we of the free world would not be shown such consideration. The motives which have prompted the Chinese Communist Government in Peking to despatch forces into North Korea are still obscure. Until we are obliged to believe otherwise, however, I would suggest that it might be wise to assume, as indeed is suggested by some of the evidence, that this incursion has been dictated by limited considerations and that it should not deflect us from our policy of trying, in every way open to us, to prevent the war from spreading.

Speaking in the House of Commons on August 31 I said: "I would like to emphasize also that it is not the purpose of this Government to support any course of policy which will extend the scope of the present conflict in Korea; a conflict which should be confined and localized if it is in our power to do that; and, if not, a policy which should avoid giving anyone else an excuse for extending it". That has been the policy of the Canadian Government from the outset of the war in Korea. It is still our policy today. And we have used whatever influence we have to urge these views on other governments which are involved in the hostilities in Korea. We have also urged - I did so when I spoke before the General Assembly of the United Nations on the 27th of September - that nothing should be done in the establishment of a united and free Korea which would carry the slightest menace to Korea's neighbours. Strict observance of these principles may, I am aware, in certain circumstances, complicate the immediate problems which face the United Nations Commander in Korea. Nevertheless I am convinced that we must be guided by them constantly as long as there is any chance of preventing the war from spreading. It may be that the Chinese Communists will demonstrate by their future actions that what they intend is an unlimited aggression against Korea. If unhappily that turns out to be the case, it will be necessary for the United Nations to take knowledge of the fact and to enlarge the field of action of the United Nations Commander. The aggressor may have to be met where he comes from. The Canadian Government could hardly, however, be party to any action which has not been sanctioned by the United Nations or support within the United Nations any action to extend the field of operations unless and until it is clear that Chinese Communist forces have been sent to Korea on more than a protective and border mission.

The same desire to localize the conflict and prevent it from spreading has dictated the policy which we have followed, and will continue to follow, over Formosa. We appreciated the necessity for action which President Truman took on the 27th of June in ordering the United States Seventh Fleet to defend Formosa, because it seemed to provide a way of neutralizing that island during the course of the fighting in Korea. We also understood the explanatory comment which President Truman gave in his press conference on the 31st of August when he declared: "of course, it will not be necessary to keep the Seventh Fleet in the Formosan Straits if the Korean thing is settled. That is a flank protection on our part for the United Nations forces". The question of Formosa has now been placed by the United States on the agenda of the General Assembly. We will be prepared to support in the United Nations any appropriate resolution which would authorize

the continuance of this neutralization of Formosa so long as the war in Korea makes that necessary. We are in some doubt, however, as to whether any more comprehensive action by the United Nations over Formosa could usefully be taken at this time.

Finally, I should like to suggest that these convulsions in the immediate foreground in Asia, alarming as they are, should not entirely divert our attention from the problems which lie behind them. In the background looms the monumental and age-long problem of poverty in Asia. Starvation and distress have provided the climate in which the infection of Marxist Communism could take hold. There can be no continuing tranquility in Asia until a start has been made in improving the well-being of its people. Food, shelter and clothing - these must be supplied at least in minimum quantities before there can be political stability. In this task help will be needed from countries in the West. And here again I am glad to be able to report that the United Nations is showing vigour and imagination. During this meeting of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council has been called in extraordinary session to work out a plan for rehabilitation in Korea. Clearly this is a responsibility which the United Nations must shoulder if the victory of its forces in Korea is not to be hollow. Shattered houses and ruined factories would seem a sorry emblem of victory to the people in whose country the fighting has taken place. The United Nations has also been taking action in New York to speed its plans for technical assistance in all the under-developed countries of the world, so that increasingly those peoples which have not hitherto shared in the technical advance which has been so remarkable in the West will be helped to help themselves. This approach offers one of the most practical and promising ways, I think, of eliminating the poverty in Asia on which communism feeds and fattens.

In a great number of ways, then, I would maintain the United Nations is showing renewed vigour and energy. The problems which face it are still enormous and complex. But it may well be that a historian looking back at the crisis which beset the organization last June will feel that it should be regarded as a temporary fever from which the organization has emerged in better health than ever before. By resisting the virus of aggression it has developed in itself new strengths which should enable it to meet successfully whatever challenges the future may present. In meeting those challenges, our country, Canada, will, I know, continue to play its part.

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