



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
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No. 54/49 SHOULD CANADA RECOGNIZE RED CHINA?

A statement by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. L.B. Pearson, for the "Peoples School", St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, N.S., November 7, 1954.

Since the Communist regime was established in Peking on October 1, 1949, the question of its recognition has received wide discussion in Canada, with honest differences of opinion vigorously expressed.

First of all, what is the meaning of this word "recognition"? According to international law, the principal condition which a government must fulfil in order to qualify for diplomatic recognition is that it exercise effective control over its national territory and have a reasonable prospect of permanence. But there are important additional factors, such as the extent to which the government commands the obedience of the bulk of the population and its willingness to honour its international obligations. To be eligible for recognition a government need not be either democratic in our sense, or even fully representative of its people. Applying these criteria fourteen countries, outside the Soviet bloc, and including the United Kingdom, have recognized the Peking regime.

We are all agreed, I think, that the Communist Government does control the actions of a majority of the Chinese people, whether we or they like it or not. But have the Chinese Communists shown up to now that they are prepared sincerely to assume the duties and responsibilities of membership in the international community? Furthermore, armed intervention by the Chinese Communist forces in Korea against the United Nations has, to say the least, raised grave doubts as to their peaceful intentions. For these reasons, the Canadian Government has taken the position that unless and until there is some evidence of a genuine disposition to follow the rules of acceptable international behaviour the Chinese Communist Government has no claim to our formal recognition. To specify in advance and in detail the conditions which would have to be met before such recognition could be given is difficult. Indeed, to try to do so would, as I see it, be neither entirely logical or wise, in view of the traditional policy of this and most other free

democratic countries of recognizing in our own interest certain Communist and other totalitarian regimes whose domestic and foreign policies are not more to our liking than those of Peking.

I would also stress that any recognition of the Peking Government does not have to include a commitment to support the handing over of Formosa to the control of that government.

What is involved in this question of recognition is not a simple moral judgment; whether we think the Communist regime is good or bad. So far as I am concerned, I think that any totalitarian regime allied to or working with the international Communist conspiracy is bad or worse! There are, however, conflicting considerations which must be carefully calculated in order to determine what is in the best interests of Canada and of the democratic world; and, indeed, of the subjugated peoples in the Communist countries themselves, who are the first victims of this kind of rule. Up to the present, it has seemed to us that recognition, though it might have certain advantages, would encourage the aggressive tendencies of the Chinese Communists with whom - we should not forget - we have not yet made peace in Korea. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore one very important fact. When problems arise which directly concern China, we have now to deal with the government which is in effective control of the Chinese mainland. It so happens that at this time this effective government of China is the Peking Communist regime. In order to find a solution to the problem of peace in the Far East we have to accept the fact of Communist power in China, just as we accept that fact in the Soviet Union. We recognized, for instance, at Geneva that Korea could not be unified peacefully except through negotiation with the North Korean and Chinese Communist Governments. That is why a Chinese Communist delegation was officially present at that conference.

I would say therefore that if the Communist Chinese were sincerely to co-operate in the achievement of peaceful and honourable settlements to Far Eastern problems, and were to respect the agreements reached, then formal recognition, which however would not in any sense imply approval, of their Government by Canada could be looked at again. I do not think that we should go further than that in present circumstances. But equally, I do not think that we should tie ourselves down to any rigid commitments that never will we recognize any Communist Government in China.

S/C