



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 50/31

CANADA AND THE FAR EAST

An address by Mr. L.B. Pearson, Secretary of State for External Affairs, before the Canadian Club, in Victoria, on August 21, 1950.

I would like to talk to you today - briefly and, I am afraid, very sketchily, about one or two aspects of current developments in Asia. You in British Columbia are in a special position of vantage to view, and view with the perspective of years of close association, Canada's relations with Asia. Those relations are of increasing concern to us, as Asia itself becomes more and more important in world affairs. That importance is far broader, and goes far deeper than Korea, and Canada will have to adjust its policies and its thinking to conform to it.

Because of the intermingling of the societies of North America and Western Europe, there has been a natural tendency for Canada, especially Eastern Canada, to be particularly - you might add too exclusively - pre-occupied with finding solutions to the difficult economic, political and security problems with which the destructions of the Second World War confronted the European and North Atlantic communities. We have made progress in dealing with these problems. In the economic field, the Western European countries through the Organization for European Economic Co-operation - with which the United States and Canada are now associated - are working together effectively and encouragingly toward a goal of co-operative stability and prosperity. In the political field, they have combined in the Brussels Treaty and the Council of Europe to preserve, against communist aggression and by joint effort, their great heritage of Western Christendom, which is our heritage too. In the North Atlantic Treaty, the countries of Western Europe have been joined by Canada and the United States in a mutual defence pact against aggression. Progress in converting that paper pact into armed defensive strength is being made. That progress has quickened - as it should have - since Korea showed us what we are up against. The results of that quickening will appear in the months ahead in terms of new concrete defensive strength. This will include stronger Canadian forces and also Canadian aid in the building up of Western European forces, our first line of defence against the dark aggressor from the East.

In the North Atlantic area, then, we have set our feet firmly upon a road which we believe is leading in the right direction, and we are moving faster on that road. Meanwhile, on the other side of the world little progress has been made in dealing with the great postwar problems of the Pacific area. Nor can these problems, in any event, be solved by the same methods that we have adopted in Europe, as some impatient persons seem to think. Economic assistance for Asia, for instance, has to be related to the special circumstances of that part of the world;

and, indeed, to the suspicion and sensitiveness of its peoples. Likewise, in the field of political security, the conditions for a Pacific security pact - on the model of the Atlantic Pact - do not exist. We must, therefore, be wary of coming too easily to the conclusion that arrangements which have proved their effectiveness in one part of the world can be readily adapted to meet the needs of another. There are undoubtedly basic differences which we cannot ignore between the present situation in the East and that in the West, in so far as a collective security pact is concerned. In the North Atlantic we had a true community of nations with long standing economic, political and cultural ties between them, similar political systems, and a demonstrable collective capacity to contribute to the common defence. We had an easily definable geographical area, on which it was in our collective interest to forbid an aggressor to trespass. Not all of these fundamentals are present in Asia, thus making the problems of regional defence and collective security in that area infinitely more difficult. There is the question too of whether a requisite number of Asian nations - all of whom have pressing internal problems to solve - would be willing to support such a Pact. There has grown up among the new nation states of Asia a distinctive point of view which manifests their desire to settle their own problems, including their security problems, in their own way. This view is particularly strong in India and Indonesia and it is one which we should respect. In my view, a Pacific Security Pact at this time, which would include Asian and non-Asian countries, of varying degrees of stability and development, and without the ties that link the states of the Atlantic community, would be an uneasy and artificial creation, without strong foundations. Certain of the governments chiefly concerned - including the British, Indian, American and Canadian - have felt that it was premature at this stage to attempt such a Pact along the lines of that which is now the foundation for the increasingly close association of the North Atlantic community. But this certainly does not mean that Canada recognizes no obligations regarding collective security in the Pacific - or has no security interest in that area. Korea - and our participation in United Nations action there - proves the contrary. It shows that we have very definite obligations in respect of the peace of the Pacific and that it is our interest, and our duty, to carry out those obligations. Indeed, it is significant that, while our general responsibility under the United Nations Charter has been reinforced in the Atlantic area by the specific obligations of a precise treaty, nevertheless, the area of the world where we have first been asked to support the United Nations by force, has been the Pacific, in Korea.

We will not, I think, fully understand the significance of United Nations action in Korea - nor will we be able to make that action effective and beneficial - for Korea and beyond Korea - unless we of the Western democracies realize something of the forces that have been working in Asia over the years.

These forces have been moving, irresistibly, towards two objectives - national freedom and human welfare. Japanese aggression jarred and loosened the foundations of the old colonial structures in Asia. The slogans of "Asia for the Asiatics" and a "Co-prosperity Sphere in East Asia", though merely cloaks for Japanese domination and exploitation, had a wide propaganda appeal, just as communist slogans have in Asia now. The masses of Asia were sufficiently disillusioned by the old order to be ready to try something new. What did they have to lose? A crust of bread and a precarious hold on life. The inevitability of gradual development made little appeal to them against revolutionary proposals. So, ready or not, they demanded immediate national independence. Their aspirations have been substantially met.

Since the war, no less than ten former colonial areas in Asia have been formed into independent states. The old colonial order, with its good and its bad, has ended.

Political change stimulated a desire for change also in the old economic and social order, which had meant so little in human welfare to the submerged millions. Those who had achieved freedom demanded, and more urgently, bread as well. But bread, unlike independence, cannot be secured by a political campaign. In the first place, the populations of these Eastern countries are increasing at a rate that overreaches normal economic development. Therefore, abnormal measures are called for. But these countries are ill-equipped for rapid, abnormal, development. Political instability; administrative weaknesses; shortage of qualified technicians; economic unbalance; lack of capital for industrial development; all these are road blocks in the way of social progress and human betterment in Asia. Yet the demand for such improvement remains insistent. It can only be achieved within a measurable time with assistance from countries technically and materially more advanced.

Where can Asia get this help? From international communism led by the Soviet Union, or from free democracy led by the Western powers? Both offer co-operation. One is a spurious, but also a superficially enticing offer; of paradise at once, if only communism is established and the bourgeoisie liquidated. The other, the democratic, is a genuine, but less exciting offer of help and co-operation with results to be achieved slowly, with toil and effort. In this competition for the friendship of Asia, Western countries, moreover, have to live down the reputations with which they have been branded, often unfairly, as colonial and exploiting powers. Communism, on the other hand, has no such reputation to live down in Asia where its sordid, anti-national record is not yet generally known. We in Canada, who live well and enjoy political freedom, know that communism is a debasing and degrading economic and political system. The masses of continental Asia, however, do not. They have never had a standard of living comparable even to that in the Soviet Union today, nor have they, for the most part, known the civil and political liberties that we take almost for granted, and by which we have been enriched for so many years. So communism looks more attractive to many of the peoples of Asia than it does to us; and communist propaganda is skilled and unscrupulous in taking advantage of this fact. Lenin and Stalin put up communist theory in a package specially designed for marketing in the colonial areas of Asia, and their salesmen are having far greater success in peddling their wares in that part of the world than elsewhere.

It is against this background that we should survey and try to assess what has happened in Korea.

When the North Korean army made its cynical and aggressive attack on the Republic of Korea, it reflected the determination of Soviet imperialism, using international communism as its spearhead, to extend its sway over Asia, and ultimately over the world. There was nothing new in this communist policy of aggression. The method adopted in Korea, however, in contrast to that hitherto used in Europe, was new, in that an open and armed attack was made. Of course, Mr. Malik is now attempting to convince the United Nations that the North Korean communists were the victims, not the aggressors. He is an ingenious person, and, if instructed to do so, could, I am sure, prove conclusively, to his own satisfaction at least, that a fist has been knocked out by a chin!

Korea happens to be the particular place where the communist fist has now struck. The challenge, of course, is far wider than Korea, but it is of significance that an Asian country was picked by international communism as the scene of the present attack. It is there, the communists may have thought, that they would have a good chance to achieve their aggressive purposes with the minimum of interference. Korea is a remote spot on the map, strategically not very important, and, furthermore, a country which was itself divided. It was possible, in Korea as it has been possible elsewhere, for the war in Korea to be fought by satellites, by Asian troops alone. Therefore, when the United Nations intervened, the war could then be mis-represented, as it is being mis-represented, as one of Asian popular forces against those of western imperialist capitalism. Where the communists miscalculated was in the swiftness of United Nations reaction, under the determined and courageous leadership of the United States, and on the possibility of that reaction expressing itself through the immediate use of armed forces which were close at hand in Japan.

Canada is one of 53 countries which has supported this action of the United Nations against the communist aggressor, and we are one of a half a dozen countries which has already made its support effective. That support - including support from Canada - will grow in strength, as the United Nations gathers its forces to meet and defeat the challenge. While this is being done, however, American and Korean troops are gallantly and tenaciously holding the line in the face of great difficulties. As is inevitable when an aggression is committed, (we know this from bitter experience), those who defend peace are at an initial disadvantage, while defensive force is being gathered. Democracy is normally a slumbering giant and it takes a shock to awaken it to action. I think that we have had that shock, and that the necessary action will be taken. It must be taken. It should not have caused surprise, however, if the United Nations, which was frustrated, by Soviet obstruction, in its earlier plans to have armies available to defeat an aggressor, did not have sufficient force immediately to throw back this planned Korean attack. But that will be done, and Canada will play - indeed, is playing - an honourable part in doing it. It may, however, be a tough job and take longer than was originally expected. Nor should it be done at the expense of larger plans to defend the free world against aggression elsewhere; possibly in more vital areas. Defence now means, for all free countries, far more than land forces for Korea. It also means a job which cannot be done as a mere side show which will not interfere with the main performance of ordinary civilian activity. It will cost the free countries - including Canada - much in sweat and treasure now, if they are to prevent the later and infinitely harder payment of tears, blood and destruction.

Let us not try to deceive ourselves that we can have protection without special effort. That effort involves - or should involve - far more than a contribution to United Nations forces in Korea. Nevertheless, Korea has provided the shock which has awakened us to its necessity. We should be very clear, therefore, as to what this Korean operation means. If we fail here, we may later fail in more important places.

The communists will try to represent anything the United Nations does now in Korea as assistance to American imperialists against an Asian people struggling to be free. Mr. Malik is already doing his vicious best at Lake Success, through the technique of the big and constantly repeated lie, to create this fiction. With devilish ingenuity and energy worthy of a better cause, this "big lie" is being drummed into the minds of the Asian

millions day and night, and may have some success. The fact is that in Korea, we are not helping the United States. The United States itself has been the first country to insist on this. We are discharging our obligation as a member of the United Nations in defence of peace. The Canadian Government has been determined from the beginning to make this principle the basis of its policy in respect of Korea. In doing so it is not influenced by considerations of constitutional propriety or of national amour propre. One reason why we, and others, have insisted that this must be the character of the Korean conflict is to make it clear to the Asian people that this conflict is not one of the East versus the West; the white man against the yellow man. It is the rallying of those from all the free world - East and West - who would defend peace against an aggressor, and who are determined to make it clear in quarters where it needs to be made clear, that aggression does not pay.

It should also be obvious now to everyone in Asia, that while western imperialism may have had its faults and committed its sins in the 19th century, it is no longer any threat to the complete freedom of Asiatic countries. On the contrary, the Western World now offers to co-operate with the free countries of Asia on a basis of mutual respect and mutual aid. It should be equally obvious, on the other hand, that there can be no genuine national freedom where international communism, acting as the agent of Soviet imperialism, holds sway. Yugoslavia is only one dramatic proof of that fact. Does Asia also have to learn the same lesson the hard way?

In order to get the strong and vigorous support of free Asia for United Nations action in Korea, and, indeed, for United Nations action wherever aggression has to be met, we must also continue to emphasize that the United Nations, in its recent decisions, is concerned only in defeating aggression in Korea, and is not concerned, for instance, with the re-conquest by the National Chinese Government in Formosa of the mainland of China. There is nothing that the U.S.S.R. would like better than to confuse the Korean and the Formosan issues. There is nothing that the democracies should be more careful to avoid than such confusion. If we do not, we play right into the hands of the communist propagandists, make anxious and uneasy those who wish to maintain a strong and united front against aggression in Korea.

We must also prove by our policy and action in Korea, and elsewhere in Asia, that the western democracies are not on the side of reaction and opposed to progress. We have made a good beginning in this respect by a policy of economic and technical assistance to Asian countries. The Western democracies, including Canada, have supported that policy and are taking steps to implement it. There is no one in Canada who has done more in this connection than our Minister of Fisheries. I have no doubt, however, that in his beneficial activities in Colombo, in Sydney, in Ottawa, and wherever he happens to be, Mr. Mayhew has been violently attacked by the Soviet propagandists as a "satrap of Wall Street" and as a sinister exploiter of the toiling millions of Asia!

In contrast to the kind of economic assistance and co-operative help which the democracies can and are planning to give Asian countries is that proffered by the communists. Any help they give will be given for the purpose of making the Asian territory in question a mere satellite of Moscow, to be used for Moscow's profit, and at Moscow's will. True, communists make certain immediate social and economic changes when they get control of a country, which may appear to be, and indeed often are, beneficial

for the workers and peasants. But those changes merely bait the hook of ultimate slavery. That would certainly be the case in Korea, if the northern communists ever conquered that country. Our intervention in Korea, on the other hand, and we must never cease to underline this, even while the fighting is going on, is solely for the purpose of restoring peace and establishing a free, self-governing unified Korea.

If we can make that clear we will defeat Russian propaganda and we will get the strong support, not only of the Korean people, but of Asian people generally. For that purpose, I think it would be useful if the United Nations were to establish a small commission to work out with representatives of the Republic of Korea, plans for a government of a free and united Korea, once the fighting has ceased in that unhappy land. I am afraid that more will be required in present circumstances than a return to the status quo. To determine what more should be required is, I think, primarily the responsibility and, indeed, the privilege of Asian members of the United Nations. For that purpose, if a commission of the kind I have suggested were formed, I think it would be wise to have the majority of the commission from Asia. We get, these days, a lot of good advice from Asian leaders on the handling of Asian problems. This would be a good occasion to offer them responsibility for translating this advice into action.

From what I have said, you will have gathered that, in my view, the situation in Asia is serious and, indeed, explosive. It is, however, only one sector in the front against communist aggression, and we would be making a fatal mistake if our concentration on that sector caused us to be indifferent to what is going on elsewhere. Fortunately in Europe and in North America, there is no such indifference. The free peoples are now aroused, and are ready for the sacrifices and the effort which we must now make if we are to be able to defend ourselves against the threat of communist aggression. In the present unhappy condition of a divided world, our best chance of peace lies in strength: military, economic and moral strength, not for attack, but for defence, so that he who would disturb the peace will look, listen and stop.

S/C