

by the surge of world events to take a serious interest in Asia. But I think it was mainly because we instinctively felt that a new era was opening for the Commonwealth when these peoples, the inheritors of great civilizations, chose, of their own free will, to remain in this family association of nations which spreads across the globe. Through the Commonwealth Colombo Plan and related programmes of assistance, we can give these newer Commonwealth countries technical and material help. We can do more. We can give them sympathy and understanding and support in their new aspirations. In their turn, they can give us fresh knowledge and appreciation of their way of life from which we of the West may gain much.

This exchange is not, of course, confined to the Commonwealth. Many other Western nations, notably the United States, have close relations with our Asian partners of the Commonwealth; and many non-Commonwealth countries in Asia are actively connected in one way or another with nations of the West. Nevertheless, the Commonwealth is today probably the strongest bridge between free Asia and the West. It is of vital importance to both that it be maintained. Indeed it must be maintained if the new Commonwealth is to survive and develop.

There are dangers ahead. Between the West and the free countries of Asia there are occasionally signs of mutual misunderstanding and even tension. We should resist such tendencies by doing everything we can to give each other an accurate picture of our respective views and purposes; and, on matters in which the countries of a particular area are directly concerned, we should strengthen the practice of frank and continuous consultation which is characteristic of the Commonwealth.

Another danger is that we of the West, through pre-occupation with more immediate ends, might fail to afford the free nations of Asia the support they need to develop their economies and prove to their peoples the value of democratic processes. There are limits to what the West can do under present circumstances when defence needs must have priority. But I suggest, for example, that if we fail to do what we can to help India or Pakistan or Ceylon show free Asia that the democratic way of life is preferable to the Communist, we shall not only weaken Asia, we shall weaken ourselves.

Listening to the four speakers in this series, you will have turned your thoughts to the four corners of the globe. You have heard four different viewpoints; yet, at the same time, you will have noticed that we all speak as members of a single international family. Talks of this kind bring home the most obvious feature of the Commonwealth - its unity in diversity. It is diverse racially and geographically. To some extent it is diverse economically and politically. But in many fields it is capable of significant co-operation and collective action. Furthermore, there is in the Commonwealth always the desire to work together, to see each other's point of view, even when that desire does not express itself in immediate agreement.