

The Commonwealth of today is an inspiring example of friendly association of nations of diverse races, cultures, creeds and political institutions. Its members may be divided in their approach to some questions, but they are solidly united in their dedication to the cause of peace and to the promotion of better understanding.

Great credit for this outstanding achievement in international co-operation and for the successful launching of these new nations must be given to the United Kingdom. All other nations of the Commonwealth - including Canada, although it is a long time ago in our case - were at one time colonies, and in their progress to nationhood the United Kingdom has given generously and wisely of its aid and guidance.

Unfair Accusations

This being the case, I find it very hard to understand the bitter and sometimes unfair attacks which, from time to time, are made against the United Kingdom on the subject of colonialism. We all know that there are difficulties to be overcome in some territories, but surely the United Kingdom's record of past accomplishment in this field justifies confidence in its intention to guide these peoples to independence.

Unhappily, from this very rostrum and in debates in many other United Nations bodies, the Soviet Union has painted quite another picture of these colonial developments. Soviet spokesmen have chosen to disregard peaceful evolution in the Commonwealth, where freedom and independence have become a living reality for 600 million people since the Second World War.

Canada's own part in developing the Commonwealth prompts us to reject the Soviet Union's criticisms and its claim to be the champion of freedom and independence for subject peoples. Sometimes I marvel at the nerve of the Soviet Union representatives in making this claim.

We urge that the United Nations should view the Soviet attack in proper perspective. In 1960, the Prime Minister of Canada reminded the General Assembly about the position of subject peoples within the Soviet empire. Many millions there cannot today exercise the right of self-determination which the Soviet Government demands for others.

The denial of human rights and fundamental freedoms casts grave doubts on the Soviet Union's whole position on colonialism. When the United Nations is examining situations in many other areas of the world, it should not ignore the areas under Soviet rule. The Charter principles on human rights and self-determination are clearly intended to be universal in their application.