

*The Address—Mr. Pearson*

who presided over our deliberations with urbanity and good nature, and did much to make our meetings a success. He introduced one custom which to me, at least, was new at international meetings, and I am not sure that it would not be a good idea to copy it at other meetings which I have attended and which have not always been characterized by the good nature and the friendliness of the one we had in Ceylon. When the discussions became a little, shall I say, overzealous, or when we began to get a little tired and lost some of our patience, it was the invariable practice of our chairman to bang the gavel and say: "We will now have a cup of tea". That happened normally three or four times a day, and it proved to be a very useful expedient indeed. I think it might be introduced at Lake Success.

The agenda at our meeting at Ceylon was short, and the subjects set down for consideration were very broad. The agenda included the following questions: The general international situation; Chinese situation; Japanese peace treaty; situation in southeast Asia and the situation in Europe, more particularly the development towards European political and economic union, and the effect of such development on the commonwealth of nations.

In the discussion of these subjects we held eleven meetings. The discussions were informal, friendly, and frank. Straight talk was possible at this meeting because a good understanding existed between the participants. We could disagree, and we did disagree, without danger of anyone wanting to walk out. There were no appeals to passion or prejudice, because there was the honest desire, as is customary at commonwealth meetings, to get together. There were no appeals to the gallery, because we did not have a gallery.

So far as the value of these discussions is concerned, it is true of course to say that nothing spectacular resulted, nor was anything spectacular intended. Commonwealth discussions now do not customarily result in spectacular decisions; in fact they do not result in decisions at all. They result in recommendations to governments for the consideration of those governments. The recommendations made at Colombo are now before the various governments for any action they decide to take.

No single policy was laid down or was attempted, on any of the questions before us at Ceylon. We listened to each other's points of view, and I think that we gained something from doing so. An exchange of views of this kind between governments representing countries from five continents of the

world—from Asia, from Europe, from Australasia, from Africa and from North America—is bound to be useful in modifying points of view which may have been held prior to the meeting.

So far as the Canadian delegation was concerned, we inevitably tended to give the North American viewpoint on the political questions which were discussed, and a dollar viewpoint on the economic questions. Though we all had our own point of view, a discussion of this kind helps to correct the inevitable distortions in our thinking which may arise, in the case of Canada, for instance, because we have traditionally looked on the world from the north Atlantic, North American viewpoint of a people whose civilization for the most part comes from that of western European Christendom.

The fact that the discussions were held at Ceylon was particularly valuable at this time, because, as I see it, the centre of gravity in international affairs has, to some extent at least, moved to Asia. What I mean by that is simply this: In my view the advance of Russian communist imperialism has been stopped in Europe, at least for the time being. It has not been stopped in Asia, where it is now trying desperately to win power over those millions of people, by allying itself with forces of national liberation and social reform.

It has had great success in China. Until now, continental China, at least, is under the control of a communist government which is allied to Russia. In spite of the publication of the recent Russian-Chinese treaty we are not yet however quite certain what form the alliance has taken. The nationalism of the people of Asia has now finally and fully asserted itself. It is even true to say that in some quarters in this part of the world, people, if they were forced to make the unhappy choice, might prefer even communism to a return to colonialism. The existence of this feeling is recognized now by the nations of Europe and America.

The political mould into which south and southeast Asia was gradually poured during the years following the European incursions four hundred years ago, or more, has now been broken finally, and the great colonial empires of the nineteenth century have either disappeared from that part of the world or are in process of disappearing. No one yet knows what pattern will emerge from that disappearance. No one can be certain, as I see it, that the independence which the people of this area are now exercising can in all cases be maintained in its present form, or whether their internal problems will prove so great that, through weakness, they will fall