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SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION

An address by Mr. Hume Wrong, Canadian Ambassador to the United States, to the Canadian Club of Toronto, March 22, 1948.

Since I have been concerned with the course of international affairs for a good many years, I imagine that you expect me to say something about the international situation. When some months ago I accepted the invitation to speak to the Canadian Club I had hoped that it might be possible for me to find a cheerful subject in this field. It would be pleasant if I could talk optimistically about the state of the world today. It did not look very happy when the invitation was received, and it looks worse now. While there are bright spots, these are rifts in a stormy and threatening sky. The subjugation of Czechoslovakia, tragically dramatized by the suicide of Jan Masaryk on March 10th, has everywhere heightened the sense of danger and increased a tension already far too acute for any comfort of mind.

I am not a pessimist, in that I believe that we certainly are not bound inevitably to fight another great war in order to prevent our freedom from being overthrown. I am not an optimist, in that I believe that there is no short or easy road to security and lasting peace. We shall, I am sure, continue to be faced for several years at least with recurrent crises and pressing anxieties which will affect the lives of every one of us.

We must not, of course, allow disillusionment to turn into despair or anxiety into panic. There are real grounds for hope. Some of our disillusionment arises from having set our hopes too high in the last stages of the war, just as we did twenty and more years ago after the other war. The major part of it comes from the positive actions of others, actions which a huge majority of the people of the Western world now recognize as menacingly hostile to their chosen way of life. When the Charter of the United Nations was being drafted in the spring of 1945, it would have seemed almost incredible that the victorious allies, after enduring the tortures and putting forth the efforts that won the war, should so soon have ranged themselves in two opposing groups, and started to conduct what Mr. Walter Lippmann has lucidly christened a cold war.

The result is that we have today what the Secretary of State of the United States, General Marshall, recently called "a very, very serious situation", - so serious as to lead the President of the United States last Wednesday to request the temporary revival of wartime conscription and the inauguration of a continuing system of universal and compulsory military training in peacetime.

A part of its seriousness comes from the development of a skillful technique of conquest from within, of which the recent events in Prague are the latest of several examples. Some of you will remember that in 1919 one of the difficult problems before the Paris Peace Conference was to find effective means of protecting minorities inside

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