

Appendix 8

Canadian Statement, Ad Hoc Political Committee, April 20, 1949: Human Rights in Eastern Europe

The Charter of the United Nations places upon member states an obligation, as one of the prime purposes of this Organization, to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights. Sometimes these friendly relations are disturbed as a result of long-term developments rather than from sudden emergencies. That is why the Charter in various places refers to the rights and freedoms of the individual in society. History is full of examples of severe unrest and instability resulting from the activities of repressive governments which sought to take freedom from their citizens. If there are signs in the world again today that men are systematically being deprived of liberties which are recognized as essential in a stable and progressive society, the United Nations must concern itself with this situation, must point out the dangers if they are seen to exist, and must earnestly seek whatever remedy is possible.

This is the reason we are discussing today the evidences of religious persecution in Hungary and Bulgaria. Many times in history attempts have been made to subjugate the church to the service of the state. These efforts have always been a cause of suffering, of dissension and of conflict. In the end they have always failed. Recent events in Bulgaria and Hungary and indeed in other countries in Eastern Europe have given rise to anxieties throughout the world that a new effort is now being made in these countries to reduce the church to a position where it is a mere agency of government. We cannot ignore these developments.

It is a truism to say that the world is growing smaller and more inter-dependent every day, and what happens in regard to the observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms in one group of countries cannot be ignored by others. We believe, therefore, that whether we like it or not, sustained attacks upon freedom anywhere in the world eventually affect us all.

The nations which are represented on this Committee have specific obligations as members of the United Nations, in the words of Article 55, to promote "universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion". The word "universal" in this clause is of particular importance. Our concern for freedom must extend to all parts of the world.

It therefore falls upon us to consider the grave charges which have been made regarding events in Bulgaria and Hungary. When evidence is brought before this Organization that the Governments of Bulgaria and Hungary are making organized attempts to suppress religion, we must consider these charges and call upon these Governments with all the authority of this world Organization to abandon their assault upon one of the most precious strongholds of human spirit, religious freedom.

The evidence in regard to what has happened and is still happening in Bulgaria and Hungary is well known. Some of it has already been recited in previous statements made in this Committee. Taken together it represents a clear pattern easily discerned and understood. That pattern is the at-