

External Affairs

native troops to carry on the resistance themselves. The population of Viet Nam, Laos and Cambodia, amounting to 28 millions, would provide available manpower if native troops were trained.

Should we give assistance along that line, or could we give more assistance to France in Europe? Can we make commitments there to indicate that we will not withdraw our troops so long as they are required in the NATO force in Europe? Should we provide more than a brigade? Should we raise our quota—again thinking in terms of aid to France?

I suggest those are matters that should be taken into consideration. I suggest further that we can aid France by taking our full part around the conference table at Geneva. I take issue with the Secretary of State for External Affairs when he suggests that we would play a rather minor role there, in so far as Indo-China is concerned, and that we would be only observers. Why should we not play a full part by sitting down with other nations at that conference table and giving our support to our allies at the conference? Why must we stand on the sidelines? We are called upon, when world crises crop up, to play a major part. Canada has never been hesitant about that. We have stepped right out on the stage; we have never stayed in the wings when armed conflict has occurred in the world. Why should we not then play the same part at the conference table?

On occasion we are rather inclined to believe that as a small nation we cannot play a major part. But small nations in the history of the world have often played a decisive part in the course of events. We have only to look back at the small state of Athens when they opposed the great Persian empire; we have only to look at the small Roman republic which fought against the great Carthaginian empire in the three Punic wars. However, consider Great Britain with a population of between 8 and 10 million at the time of the Napoleonic wars. She stood up against the armed forces of Europe in a twenty-year struggle; or for that matter Canada's action in the Kaiser's war of 1914-18 and Hitler's war of 1939 to 1945, a small nation playing an important and in some instances a decisive part in those conflicts. We can supply not only munitions of war and food but fighting troops, which are not second-line troops under any conditions. They have always been first-line shock troops. Therefore a small nation is not necessarily prohibited from an active part either in war or in peace.

During the times of uneasy peace such as are prevailing now, and such as prevailed in [Mr. Churchill.]

the 1930's, Canada has not played its full part. I hope that we shall be more active at the conference table in international affairs. Small nations have shown what can be done under inspired leadership. You think readily of Smuts of South Africa, a small nation; but he was a commanding figure in international affairs in the first world war and subsequent to that. We think of our own Sir Robert Borden playing an active part, representing a small nation and playing an active part in the imperial conference during the first world war and at the peace conference that succeeded it. Therefore we can play our full part in the days of uneasy peace just as we did play our full part in time of war.

I therefore urge upon the Secretary of State for External Affairs that Canada be represented at the conference table at Geneva when this subject of Indo-China is under consideration for the reasons that I have already pointed out. It is our own interest. We want to assist France, because if we assist France, then France assists us in forming a barrier against any possible aggression in Europe and of course elsewhere in the world.

You may say we cannot afford too many more commitments; that we are sufficiently committed at the present time; but we have seriously to consider whether it is not more important to make commitments in order to prevent war than to be obliged, when war breaks out, to enter into the thing partially prepared. We have had that experience twice in our history. Let us not repeat it.

Finally, let me say this: Canada has a major part to play in the councils of the world. She has demonstrated in the past in warfare the part that she can play effectively. She should demonstrate now at the conference table that she can play just as effective a part toward the prevention of war, which is really our main objective.

Mr. F. S. Zaplitny (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, most of the debate so far has centred around the question of the recognition of China. I have no desire to enter into that dispute whatever except to note that the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Pearson) has, in addition to his many other virtues and functions, apparently entered upon the field of prophecy because I find that in speaking in Montreal on January 5, he had this to say:

As I have said more than once, there is nothing more difficult for a political negotiator to retreat from than a bold, black headline!

In listening to the explanations given on that particular issue in this house I was beginning to believe these words. I am not going to enter into that particular dispute, because what I have to say this evening has