

7. The trial which involved seven persons and four different charges, including capital charges, was concluded in three days. No witnesses were called for the defence. The Counsel for the prosecution made no attempt to establish his case but confined himself for the most part to enlarging on the political fairness of the trial. The counsel for the defence put no case for the defence and did not contest easily refutable statements made by the Counsel for the prosecution; and the material evidence consisted of statements taken outside the court before the trial. It may be added that no representatives of non-Communist governments were permitted to attend the trial. We are informed also that the representative of the Government of Australia attempted to visit Budapest for this purpose, but though a visa was promised on six occasions, it was not forthcoming.

8. Meanwhile the government is continuing to seek the views of like minded governments, signatory to the Treaty, on the character and desirability of any further action that may be taken jointly or independently. It has been suggested, for example, that the Treaty of Peace be invoked. Unfortunately, the procedures which are immediately available under the Treaty of Peace all depend for their effectiveness on the cooperation of the Soviet Government. Since the U.S.S.R. not only supports but even encourages governments which it can influence in their hostility to religion, it is not likely to give the other signatories to the Peace Treaties much assistance in putting a halt to religious persecution in Eastern Europe. It may be, however, that the signatories to the Treaties, even without the support of the Soviet Union, could through joint representation based on these provisions of these Treaties have some influence upon the governments which are responsible for these acts.

9. Provision is also made in the Treaty for a procedure leading to the establishment of a Commission of three to act in regard to any dispute arising out of the execution or interpretation of the Treaty. The majority decision of this Commission would be binding on the parties to the dispute.

10. If this procedure were used, the obstruction of the U.S.S.R. to action under it could not become effective until efforts were made to give effect to the decisions of the Commission.

11. A further possibility that has received some public notice is that the matter be referred to the United Nations; because it would seem obvious that the spirit of repression and persecution that pervades the events under review is clearly not in keeping with the Charter of the United Nations or the Declaration of Human Rights.

12. In any case it is the view of the government that a state which fails to carry out its Treaty obligations in letter and spirit, cannot expect to be supported in its application for admission to the United Nations; and indeed might expect formally to be condemned by the world organization.

13. But, Mr. Speaker, in examining these or any other suggestions that may be made the government's course will be guided by considerations that are more significant than tactics or gestures. While giving the fullest expression to our profound abhorrence of religious persecution, however it may be disguised, we shall seek to take only such action as appears to offer a reasonable prospect of promoting the principles in which we believe and at the same time of ameliorating the situation with which we are faced in the Communist countries.

14. The events in Hungary have, as hon. members know, been followed by similar action on the part of the Bulgarian Government. On February 10 that Government issued its indictment of 15 Protestant leaders in that country, charging them with espionage, and other crimes.