

Supply—External Affairs

But I should like to join with all members of the committee in their expressions of encouragement to these subject people of the Soviet peoples whose passion for freedom has not been destroyed by the despotism of centuries, and I am thinking again of the Baltic peoples and the Ukrainians, who are now subject peoples under Soviet rule.

I agree with the hon. member for Prince Albert that the people of the free world must continue to let these subject peoples know that they are not forgotten and that at every opportunity we should give them what encouragement we can. By that I do not mean that we should arouse hopes that cannot be fulfilled, hopes of immediate liberation by force, because that would be the cruelest thing we could do to them; but we should let them know that they are not forgotten and one day, please God, they will be free again. We should take every opportunity we have of making that clear to them in any way which is open to us.

I am inclined to think myself that in addition to the encouragement they will get from us which should strengthen their morale, probably the best chance of freedom they have in the years ahead is to have those forces which may make for freedom, and which have been released by the new leaders of Russia for the time being at least, also given encouragement on our side. In a country where that kind of release is taking place, if these forces can gain momentum the chief beneficiaries of that kind of impulse will be the subject peoples now under the Soviet union. If there is anything we can do in that regard we ought to be proud to do it, especially in this country which owes so much to the people of these races.

That, Mr. Chairman, I think and I hope, deals with some of the questions that were raised during the course of the discussion. If I have omitted any, maybe hon. members will bring them to my attention.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Chairman, I think one was omitted unintentionally. I asked what general plans were arrived at, at the prime ministers' conference or as the result of consultations among the NATO nations, relative to the new look policy of the U.S.S.R. respecting trade and economic infiltration through the media of trade. I wonder whether the minister would care to say something about that.

What are the general plans? At the commonwealth prime ministers' conference was any consideration given to trade arrangements within the commonwealth? At the NATO council meeting was consideration given among the member nations of NATO

with the view that multilateral trade within the NATO nations might be encouraged and expanded to the end that the communist offensive in this regard, which up to the present has enjoyed quite a measure of success, might conceivably be met or at least stopped to some degree?

I was also wondering what the minister might have to say with regard to Iceland. As I understand the situation in Iceland, a major source of complaint on the part of the majority of the people there arose by reason of the failure of one or other of the NATO nations to maintain the extent of trade that had prevailed prior to 1952, particularly in fish and fish products. Are there any plans in mind whereby Iceland might be induced to change its attitude as recently announced by the premier of that country? What is being done to offset the tremendous increase in the fish trade with Iceland by the U.S.S.R.? Those are two or three matters on which I would appreciate further enlightenment.

Mr. Pearson: I do not know if I can give very much enlightenment on these subjects, but I shall try to deal with them briefly. So far as the first question is concerned, whether there were discussions at the commonwealth conference which would have a bearing on what has been referred to as the Soviet economic offensive, there were such discussions because we had a whole day devoted to economic matters. During that time there was a very searching examination of trade problems, especially within the sterling area, because all members of the commonwealth except Canada are members of the sterling area, and there was agreement that everything possible should be done to reduce obstructions in the way of trade and bring about the broadest possible measure of multilateral trade and payments.

But when you get to the other question of the economic offensive of the Soviet union, if you want to call it that, this illustrates very graphically the point I tried to make a few minutes ago about the divergence of membership and therefore the divergence of views within the commonwealth. There would obviously be a different approach to that subject, to its dangers and to how they should be met, if it is dangerous, on the part of India than on the part of say New Zealand. There are members of the commonwealth which are receiving economic assistance from the Soviet union of their own free will, and it is not likely that those members are going to join in any commonwealth decision to condemn what might be called the Soviet economic offensive.

But it was agreed by other members of the commonwealth, as I tried to say this