

*The Address—Mr. Pearson*

Hon. members will have had an opportunity of reading the statement of General Eisenhower before congress yesterday on the subject of north Atlantic preparedness, and the efforts which are being made, and still greater efforts which will be required, to build up our defensive alliance against any threat of aggression. So far as western Europe is concerned—and this, I repeat, is the most vital area in the front line of our defence—the effort required is partly military and partly, in the broader sense of the term, political. The free nations of Europe are profoundly aware that their future security and prosperity depend in large measure on the unity which they can achieve among themselves. In this development, Mr. Speaker, French statesmanship is playing a great part indeed, under the wise leadership of Prime Minister Plevin, whom we delight to honour in our assembly today.

If there were no other reasons for pressing ahead with these policies of European unification, the problem of Germany itself would make imperative the need for some form of European unity. If democratic Germany is to play her constructive part in a free Europe, it is essential that she should do so within the framework of a freely co-operative Europe coming closer together, economically, politically and militarily.

The present state of the European continent is, as we all know, one of tragic division. The lines which Soviet aggressive policies have drawn across the continent run contrary to the political, cultural and economic interests of the European peoples. This unnatural division, which may hold within it the seeds of future conflict, could be ended tomorrow if the Soviet government sincerely wished to bring it to an end. The three western occupying powers in Germany—the United Kingdom, the United States, and France—have now received from the Soviet government proposals for a four-power meeting on Germany. I do not intend on this occasion to discuss the character of the Soviet invitation, or the terms of the replies which the western occupying powers have returned to the Soviet government. Suffice it to say that if a satisfactory basis could be found for their talks—and it has not been found yet—the Canadian government, and, I am sure, the Canadian parliament, would welcome such a meeting. On the other hand I think it would be a very great mistake indeed to build great and optimistic hopes on the outcome of any such meeting. The truculence and falsehoods contained in the cominform declaration on Germany issued at Prague not long ago are not a foundation upon which any genuine negotiation can be founded. Nevertheless we believe that no

occasion should be neglected to attempt to achieve an enduring and honourable settlement of differences with the Soviet union.

These western European dangers and developments must, then, never be forgotten in determining our Far Eastern policy. In formulating that policy—and this is another general consideration—I think we should bear in mind also that here is a new and great tidal movement of nationalism sweeping Asia. In some countries, China for example, it is mingled and confused with, and possibly it is at the moment dominated by, the aggressive forces of Soviet communism. But it is operative in other Asian countries besides China, and it has a vitality of its own. It is something which I believe is deeper and more lasting than communism. Indeed, nationalism—allied to a restless and insistent demand for a better life—is the most important political phenomenon in Asia today. Therefore, in framing our policies we must try to avoid offending the legitimate national and social aspirations of Asian peoples, or their desire to have a chief part in the determination of Asian affairs.

We must also do what we can to improve the economic conditions and human welfare in free Asia. We must try to work with rather than against the forces struggling for a better life in that part of the world. Such co-operation may in the long run become as important for the defence of freedom—and therefore for the defence of Canada—as sending an army to Europe, in the present immediate emergency. Economic and technical assistance is one form of such co-operation. Many members in the house will have read the Colombo plan for co-operative economic development in south and southeast Asia. This imaginative, and, I think, well-founded report, which was published last November as the result of the work of the commonwealth consultative committee, points the way to the kind of effective assistance which we in the west can offer to the free peoples of Asia. They stand in very great need of capital for economic development, and of technical assistance. For Canada to supply either the capital or the technical assistance in any substantial volume would mean considerable sacrifice, now that the demands of our defence program are imposing new strains on our economy.

On the other hand, I personally have been struck by the modesty and good sense with which such countries as India and Pakistan have shown in drawing up plans for their own development for the next six years. The countries of south and southeast Asia which have drawn up programs for inclusion in the report—with populations involved including nearly one-quarter of the population of the