

"The determination we, therefore, express in the Charter 'to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights' is a vital part of the total crusade in which we are engaged. Canadians attach particular importance to the maintenance and extension of individual rights, to the protection of the institutions of family and faith, and to the removal of all forms of discrimination based on race, colour, sex or religion.

"Our concern for human rights arises also from our diverse national origins. Many Canadians still retain a profound interest in the lives of their kinsmen in other lands. Where respect for human rights and freedom and self-determination is not fully assured or where it is deliberately denied, Canadians deplore these conditions -- believing, as we do, that those rights and freedoms must be of universal application.

"Because of these convictions, we are particularly concerned that the role of the United Nations in the human rights field should be enhanced, and that recent proposals to this effect should be pursued. We support the appointment of a High Commissioner for Human Rights as proposed by Costa Rica, and will join in co-sponsoring any resolution to this effect. Human rights are of universal significance; their violation must be of universal concern."

In conveying these beliefs of the present Government to the United Nations, I was able to maintain, in terms appropriate to the present world situation, a Canadian emphasis on the universal validity of certain principles of human rights, political freedom and self-determination.

On other occasions, in the period we are considering, under the stress of events which shocked the Canadian public, Canadian leaders have made their devotion to those principles clear. I am thinking, for example, of the eloquent warning delivered by Mr. Pearson, then Secretary of State for External Affairs, before the General Assembly in 1949, at a time when a Communist takeover, or the fear of it, darkened the lives of many. Not all the "impassioned eloquence" of Soviet representatives, he said:

"... can convince us that these peoples, of their free will, happily and confidently have entrusted their destinies and their persons to the Soviet Union.... The fact that the Soviet Government finds it necessary to cut off the inhabitants of its territories from all normal contacts with other countries is to us convincing evidence to the contrary."

I recall the words of the Right Honourable Louis St. Laurent, then Prime Minister, when he wrote to Marshal Bulganin in November 1956 about the tragic events in Hungary. "I can assure you," he wrote, "that I speak for the whole people of Canada in expressing our horror at the suffering of the Hungarian people as a result of their efforts to obtain the freedom to choose their own type of government.... The Government and people of Canada have no desire to influence the form of government chosen by the peoples of Eastern Europe. Our only aim is that they should be free to do so and that the governments so chosen should steer their own independent courses...."