

VERNMENT



# STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION  
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
OTTAWA - CANADA

NO. 48/15

## THE PRESENT INTERNATIONAL SCENE

An address by Right Hon. Louis S. St. Laurent, Secretary of State for External Affairs, to Business and Service Clubs, Kitchener, Ontario, March 24, 1948.

It is with some misgiving that as Secretary of State for External Affairs I appear before a Canadian audience in March 1948 to talk about the present international scene. Less than three years ago we signed the Charter of the United Nations; we reaffirmed our faith in the worth and dignity of the individual in the rule of law and justice among nations and in respect for the pledged word. We expressed our conviction that men and nations could, by joint and sustained efforts, live together as good neighbours, be free from fear and want, and enjoy liberty of thought and worship.

And now to many it must seem we are not as close to a lasting peace as we were three years ago. We are all aware of the ominous declarations made during the last few weeks and days by President Truman, Mr. Marshall, Mr. Bevin, Mr. Bidault and others, and we have all been shocked by the tragic and symptomatic events which have recently taken place in Czechoslovakia. These declarations, and these events, have brought home to all of us the increasing threat to our national existence of the rising tide of totalitarian communism. We know that Canada's boundaries against such a threat are not merely geographical; that they must extend beyond her physical frontiers; that they run, in fact, through the hearts of free men everywhere. We know that such a line is being drawn and that on our side of the line are all those in every country who work and fight to preserve the freedom and dignity of individuals against the unbridled impact of totalitarian power and brutal might. We know there can be no neutrality in this conflict, which is as spiritual as it is political and that it has come into being in spite of all that has been done by or through the United Nations.

And yet I shall venture, a little later on, to say some good about the United Nations notwithstanding the fact that, in looking back over the three years since we signed the Charter at San Francisco, it is difficult to see what we could have done, and at what time, to prevent the present critical situation.

There are of course grave defects in the Charter we signed at San Francisco but, as you know, any charter, however imperfect, could be a useful instrument for peace if there were a determination on all sides to keep the peace, just as any covenant or any agreement is a good covenant or a good agreement if the parties to it honestly keep to its spirit, with a willingness to make it effective. But we cannot rely upon a Charter alone, no matter how skilfully drafted - nor can we rely upon an Organization alone, if the adherents to it do not take their responsibilities scrupulously, with an honest determination to make it work.

In all honesty, I do not think that we Canadians have failed in our responsibilities to the United Nations. From the inception of the United Nations we have taken an active and a willing part - and throughout this year

and next by our acceptance of membership on the Security Council we have taken upon ourselves responsibilities which normally would not be ours. Your government, through its representative on the Security Council, must give its anxious and earnest deliberation to disputes which seem remote from us, and which were not of our making. We are concerned with Indonesia, with Palestine, with Kashmir, contributing what we can to the solution of ancient problems and of ancient wrongs which antedate by centuries our very existence as a nation. We have no ambitions beyond our own frontiers; our one great aim is to live at peace with all our neighbours and to make our own land a better place for our citizens to live in. But for all our good will, and despite our readiness to help in the right ordering of the world, we are faced with this present situation in which, as I have said, we seem farther from a secure and lasting peace than three years ago, or even than at this time last year; and this is a melancholy thing to say to a gathering of Canadian citizens.

Now why is it that, so far, the United Nations has not been effective? Well, we must remember that it was set up before the end of the war for the purpose of taking over and maintaining peace after peace had been restored to the world; but the making of the peace was to remain the responsibility of those who were providing and who had provided the most effective contribution in the prosecution of the war. The fighting came to an end with the unconditional surrender of all our enemies; but the great powers, who thus retained special responsibilities and who were given special functions under the Charter, have not yet been able to carry into the peace the co-operation which made it possible for them and for us to win the war.

Under the provisions of the Charter, no major decision could be taken without the concurrence of the five great powers or, in other words, any one of the five great powers had the right to prevent effective action by the use of the veto. We had been told that this right of veto would be sparingly used and exercised only when the power resorting to it honestly felt that it was in the interest of the whole organization to prevent a certain course of action. Now, one of the great powers has consistently been using its veto to prevent constructive action of any kind from being adopted. It is a nation in which totalitarian communism prevails and it has, by its veto, attempted to prevent constructive action on our part and at the same time it has sponsored and supported subversive revolutionary communism in many other countries.

I shall not attempt to make anything like a complete survey of what has been going on, but I will point out two or three of the salient features of this terrible situation.

There has been, first of all, the failure to reach any agreement about the German peace settlement. It must be obvious that, without some agreement on the solution, political and economic, of the problem presented by 80 million Germans located in the very heart of Europe; there can be no assurance

either of economic stability or political security in any part of Europe. Up to the present, there has been no such agreement and there seems to be little immediate hope for an overall settlement.

The policy of Russia seems to be to insist on action entirely and exclusively in her own interest or, if that is not agreed to, on inaction in the hope that the dislocations of the economy of Germany and the drain of the resources of the United Kingdom and the United States and France, which these dislocations make inevitable, will so weaken them as eventually to force a decision on Russia's terms.

Naturally, it is a matter of concern for the U.S.S.R. as it is for the other states, that the industrial potential of Western Germany and the strength of the German people shall not again, some day, be directed against any one of them. We recognize that interest.

It is possible to recognize the force of some of the Soviet claims without agreeing to the establishment of a powerful central government in Germany, susceptible to communist influence or to a 10 billion dollar account for reparations out of current German production, or giving to the U.S.S.R. a voice in the control of the Rhur and the Rhineland, unless her attitude in regard to Eastern Germany radically changes.

The present stalemate threatens to bring about the total collapse of Germany unless proper steps are taken at once to prevent it. Yet, as long as the German economy lies stagnant, the occupying powers have to make vast expenditures to maintain their troops and to prevent actual starvation of many millions of people and the Western European countries, like Holland and Belgium and France and Italy which normally derive substantial benefits from trade with Germany are handicapped in their own recovery.

There is in all this, a chain of vicious consequences which is of course exploited by the communist parties. Distress and starvation and even despair are stirred by the communists, into political disorder and ideological strife. Starvation becomes a weapon of political warfare. Misery becomes a political platform.

In fact Communism has, in Europe, extended its control under Soviet leadership and direction over such countries as Roumania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Albania, Poland and now Czechoslovakia. Finland and the Scandinavian countries are under pressure from Moscow and fifth columns are active in Italy and France. It is only in Greece and Turkey of the Eastern European states, that the advance of communism has been checked.

At the moment, Greece is a key point in the struggle against aggressive communism, and is recognized as such by the British and United States governments. Turkey is another important sector of this front and assistance is being given her also in an effort to put her in a position to defend herself from threats and attacks from outside.

The tragedy of the countries of Eastern Europe, which have now become satellites of communism but which never knew political liberty and democracy, is that they have lost the great chance that victory gave them to establish free governments based on the popular will. They have sunk back into a different, but deeper despotism than they have ever known before. They will soon learn that, if they do not know it already.

Czechoslovakia, however, is one country which has earned and deserved a better fate. It is important that we who may be inclined to take freedom and parliamentary democracy for granted understand the chain of tragic circumstances which have led, once again, to the loss by Czechoslovakia of its hard won liberty.

This is a frightening case history of communism in action. It is worth studying.

In a free election held in Czechoslovakia in May, 1946, the communist party emerged as the strongest single party with 38 per cent of the votes. A five-power coalition cabinet was formed under a communist premier, Mr. Klement Gottwald. Among other important posts the communists were given the ministry of information, with control of the national radio, and the ministry of the interior - always their favourite post - with control of the police. The ministry of national defence was entrusted to an "independent" of strong communist leanings.

A new election was scheduled for April or May of this year, and the communists had confidently announced that this time they expected to win 51 per cent of the votes. In the meantime, however, they were taking certain steps to ensure this parliamentary majority. Of these steps the most insidious was the re-organization of the police force by the minister of the interior, who had quietly been transferring non-communists one by one from police command posts and replacing them with trusted communists until finally about 80 per cent of these posts were in the hands of communists. The communists were also trying to discredit and undermine the influence of their chief opponents by accusing them of subversive activities.

The non-communist members of the cabinet carried a majority resolution instructing the minister of the interior to cancel the appointment of communists to certain key police posts. When, by February 20, no reply had been received from the minister of the interior, twelve of the fourteen non-communist ministers resigned. Premier Gottwald promptly denounced the twelve non-communist ministers who had resigned as "agents of foreign reaction" and demanded that President Benes accept their resignations and allow him to form a new "people's government". At the same time he proceeded to demonstrate that the communists were both ready and willing to back this demand by the use of force. On February 22 the communist leaders of the General Confederation of Labour declared that the Confederation was solidly behind the Premier and later announced that a general strike would be called if the President did not bow to the demands of the communist party. The police were issued with arms, and local authorities were instructed to take orders from "action committees" appointed by the communist party. The Prague headquarters of the National Socialist and Social Democrat parties were occupied by the police. By Wednesday, February 25, all vital communications, government ministries, and industrial areas were under communist control and all opposition newspaper plants had been occupied by action committees. Mass demonstrations of workers were organized in the streets of Prague. Finally, President Benes, who ten years earlier had seen his country yield to the pressure of powerful neighbours on the West, now yielded to communist pressure in order to avoid bloodshed and chaos, and accepted the cabinet proposed by Premier Gottwald for the constitutional reason that the Premier had at last been able, by methods of persuasion at which we can only guess, to present a parliamentary majority.

No one is deceived by the semblance of constitutionalism provided by this parliamentary majority. The simple fact is that the communists, aware that they were losing ground and afraid of the scheduled election, have taken over by a coup d'etat and are now firmly in power with control of all the important ministries.

All the grim mechanism of the totalitarian state is now being brought into play in Czechoslovakia - arrests of political opponents, prostitution of justice, control of the press, and intimidation of all non-communists. Wholesale purges of civil servants, editors, teachers, managers, and all persons of influence or responsibility are being carried out by "action committees" set up in every plant, office, government department, and other organization. An "election" will no doubt take place as scheduled, and it may safely be assumed that the communist party will roll up an eminently satisfactory majority, but nobody in the Western world will be in the least impressed.

Of course, there are other clouds as well on the international horizon. In Italy the communists are staging a ruthless, determined and skilful fight for power. I mentioned also, a few moments ago, Indonesia, the dispute between India and Pakistan over Kashmir, the Palestine situation, the setting up of a national government in Korea. Not all of these problems are the result of the same ideological warfare: but they are all affected by it and to a certain degree overshadowed by it.

On the other hand, there are, however, signs of promising and effective democratic counter-action.

The threat to us all of this insidious spread of communism has been recognized. We are all seeing the light. Not a light like the candle which attracts the moth, but the light that serves to warn of impending danger. Our own Prime Minister had this to say about it some two months ago :

"... Communism is no less a tyranny than nazi-ism. It aims at world conquest. It hopes to effect its purpose by force... So long as communism remains as a menace to the free world, it is vital to the defence of freedom to maintain a preponderance of military strength on the side of freedom, and to secure that degree of unity among the nations which will ensure that they cannot be defeated and destroyed one by one."

Six months ago, at the United Nations General Assembly, I ventured to assert that new international political institutions might be required. I stated that it was not necessary to contemplate the break-up of the United Nations or the secession from it of the Soviet group in order to form a stronger security system within the United Nations. I pointed out that without sacrificing the universality of the United Nations, it was possible for the free nations of the world to form their own Union of the Free World for collective self-defence under Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations; that such a union could be created within the United Nations by those free states which are willing to accept more specific and more onerous obligations than those contained in the Charter in return for greater national security than the United Nations can now give its members.

I was not alone in expressing anxiety over what was going on and in thinking about effective counter-action. It was apparent to everyone that the war-torn countries of Western Europe required assistance to rebuild their devastated economies. It was apparent that something had to be done to revitalize as much as possible of the German economy without risking the re-establishment of its war potential and it was apparent that each separate unit in Europe could not be left alone to sustain the shock against the Fifth Column activities within its boundaries and the sponsorship of those Fifth Columns by the great Soviet Union.

This has now given rise to three forms of democratic counter-action which have been given different names, but which are perhaps, after all, only different aspects of the same general plan. They are:

- 1) The European recovery program and the move towards European economic unity;
- 2) The consolidation of Western Germany, - and
- 3) Plans for what is called "Western Union".

You will remember that in his Harvard speech, last June, Mr. Marshall, the Secretary of State of the United States, suggested that the European countries should get together and formulate a plan for the economic recovery of Europe. This was at once taken up by the United Kingdom and France and they held a preliminary meeting at Paris in mid-June last and drafted the outline for a conference which opened in Paris on July 12th. The Soviet Union refused to attend and exerted sufficient pressure on her satellites to create an almost solid eastern block against the plan.

This Conference set up an executive committee through which a report was submitted to the United States Secretary of State on September 22nd last. The United States Government examined the report and accepted it as reasonable basis to formulate proposals for aid to Europe. It was estimated that the participating countries would require, to balance their payments with the Western Hemisphere from April 1st 1948 to June 30th 1952, something of the order of 20 billion dollars and as you know, there is now pending before Congress a bill which would provide something of the order of 5 billion dollars for the first fifteen months, about half of which could be used for purchases in other Western Hemisphere countries, "off-shore purchases".

The implementation of the plan of recovery does not depend, however, only on assistance from this hemisphere. In the long run, Europe must stand on its own feet and that requires re-arrangement of tariff and other barriers to trade between them. Moves are therefore under way for a greater degree of European economic unity.

The first result of this unity may bring about some dislocations in Canadian trade with Europe. But I am sure we will all do all we can to keep those dislocations to a minimum, not forgetting that in the long run, Canada will benefit by any European consolidation of this kind.

As a second step, it was necessary to move toward the consolidation of Western Germany. Originally, all four occupying powers took measures regarded largely as of a transitory nature, on the assumption that a German peace treaty would not be long delayed.

But the failure of the Foreign Ministers' meeting in London last November and December, demonstrated that this was no longer a reasonable assumption. The powers occupying the Western zones have therefore had to consider the pressing needs for administrative and economic reforms in Western Germany of a more lasting character and the United Kingdom and the United States have announced a constitution for Bizonia, or the two zones they control, and in agreement with France, are proceeding to take with Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg, the steps necessary to rebuild self government, stimulate production and restore trade in that important area.

This gives reason to hope that an end will be made to the enervating uncertainty and continuous drain which has been such an obstacle to the process of general recovery.

The other very important step which was announced by Mr. Bevin in his speech of the 22nd of January last, was the plan for what has been called Western Union. The first result is the Brussels Treaty which, was signed by the United Kingdom, France and the Benelux countries, a few days ago. This is no mere military alliance directed against a possible aggressor from the East. It seeks to mobilize the moral as well as the military resources of the Western European countries and to contain or restrain Soviet expansion, not by a Maginot line, but by building up in these liberal, democratic and Christian states a dynamic counter-attraction to the degrading tenets of totalitarian and materialistic communism.

Such a union is of course not easy to realize among countries so firmly attached to their individual sovereignty, their traditions, their cultures and their ways of living; but it has been successfully started and there is room for hope that it will extend. And it may not be only Western Europe which will be forced into a spiritual, cultural, economic and political union to offset the union of the totalitarian states under the aggressive leadership of Russia.

No one wishes to see the United Nations break up nor even to force the Soviet group to secede from the United Nations. But without sacrificing the universality of the United Nations or supplanting it, it is possible for the free nations to form their own union for collective self-defence under Article 51 of the Charter.

The trend towards the formation of such self-defensive unions is not a confession of despair, but rather a message of hope. It does not mean that we look upon a third world war as inevitable, but rather that we have decided that the best way of preventing such a war is to confront the forces of communist expansionism with an overwhelming preponderance of moral, economic and military force on the side of freedom.

I think that we will eventually stop this communist expansion and will bring about the restoration of that confidence and security so necessary to make worth while and properly fruitful the time and energies we have been devoting and are devoting to the international conferences and agencies set up under the United Nations.

I told you in opening that I would have something to say about what has been accomplished so far by and under the United Nations because there is much to encourage us in the growth of international co-operation throughout the last three years.

It is a rather sad reflection upon our human nature that for most of us there is little news interest in the achievements of those United Nations agencies which have made undoubted progress toward a better ordering of the world's health and food and education, of world transport and communication, of law and human liberties.

Within the last three years, some ten or twelve agencies for international action have come into existence and into active operation.

Within the secure framework of a lasting peace, it is now quite clear that mankind can work together effectively to prevent disaster and tragedy and to increase the sum of the world's happiness and prosperity.

I think it is well to remind ourselves that there have been established in association with the United Nations certain valuable agencies for international co-operation.

One of these, indeed, the International Labour Organization, dates from the Treaty of Versailles of 1919. For almost thirty years now the I.L.O. has had the task of improving labour conditions and living standards through international action, and of promoting economic and social stability. Through its activities, which, of course, are still continuing, the safety of workers in mines and factories and in ships has been safeguarded by a series of conventions and agreements which have had wide international acceptance. The work of this great international organization has never been spectacular, but it has been a powerful agency for the creation of international understanding and for the establishment of internationally accepted standards of living and of working conditions.

I might perhaps refer, too, to the Food and Agriculture Organization which came into existence in 1946. There has lately been established by it a World Food Council on which Canada and representatives of seventeen other countries throughout the world are represented. The F.A.O. is doing what it can to ensure that exportable food surpluses are used to best advantage and also that the world's supply of farm machinery and of soil fertilizers are properly allocated in accordance with the world's needs. It is the aim of this very unspectacular organization to more than double the total world agricultural production in the course of the next twenty years.

To do this, of course, these unostentatious scientists need a world of peace.

No doubt most of you will be familiar with part, at least, of the work of the World Health Organization, another of the United Nations agencies which was established in 1946. This is one of the few international agencies which has attracted some public attention. You will recall the efficient manner in which the resources of the entire scientific world were mobilized last autumn to deal with the threatening outbreak of cholera in Egypt. Most of the work of the W.H.O., however, is much less dramatic but quite as useful and necessary in the maintenance and in the improvement of world health standards. The W.H.O. has established expert committees to deal with those special diseases which still devastate large areas of the world. The W.H.O. arranges for post-graduate study in the great medical centres of the world for ambitious and able students from those countries which have been devastated by war or which have not yet been able to make any great scientific progress of their own. The fact that one can, always assuming a world at peace, travel throughout the entire world without danger of pestilence and plague is largely due to the work of the W.H.O.

You will no doubt remember, too, the magnificent rescue of sixty-nine men, women and children from a plane which came down last autumn in the north Atlantic. It was by no means an accident that a ship was there, prepared and able to give the necessary aid in preventing what otherwise would have been an appalling tragedy. The ship which made this spectacular rescue was on duty under the authority of the International Civil Aviation Organization, another of these specialized agencies of the United Nations.

The main function of this aviation organization is to study problems of international civil aviation and to establish international standards and regulations for the safety of air travel. The coast-guard cutter which made the rescue last autumn was in fact one of the ICAO's weather stations, of which there will be ultimately thirteen, to provide the necessary weather data which will remove much of the danger in Trans-Atlantic and other sea crossings. Already forty-six states belong to this peaceful organization, and they are now engaged in arranging exchanges of commercial rights, in creating uniform technical standards for air safety, in establishing new air routes, in providing maps and charts, and in ensuring adequate standards for the air-worthiness of the ships and the training and experience of the crews. In this vital matter, then, of international air travel, the United Nations has been able to establish a very effective organization.

I could go on at perhaps tedious length to refer to other examples of international co-operation, which again are all predicated upon the expectation of a peaceful world. There is the International Bank and the International Monetary Fund to assist in the reconstruction of territories devastated during the war and to provide a stabilizing influence upon the world's currencies.

At the present time in Havana, A World Trade Conference of 62 nations is completing an agreement on a very wide basis to prevent unfair and restrictive practices in the conduct of international trade. In brief, it can very properly be stated that much of the necessary machinery for the conduct of the world's affairs on a rational and neighbourly basis is already in existence, and would become very much more effective if all threats to the world's peace could be finally removed.

The achievements, then, of the less publicized technical organizations of the United Nations have been considerable; I suppose technical problems are more likely to be discussed objectively than political issues - or to put it more frankly, it seems to be true that scientists usually are better than diplomats at getting along with one another. But even in purely political matters, the United Nations has not been without success. It has become an open forum of international discussion - at its sessions the world's statesmen discuss their differences face to face, with the entire world to hear them and when discussion is at an end they stand up and are counted.

But more concretely, the complaint of Iran against the U.S.S.R. early in 1946 was dealt with energetically by the Security Council; a mission of investigation was sent to Greece late in the same year, and the grave disorders threatening to engulf Indonesia in savage conflict have now been calmed. Foreign troops in Syria and Lebanon were peacefully withdrawn, and the dispute between Great Britain and Albania over mine damage to British warships is now before the International Court of Justice. There has indeed been no substantial agreement on disarmament nor on the control of atomic energy, but an enormous amount of preliminary work has been accomplished and the areas of disagreement are now well defined. Protection and comfort and maintenance are being given daily to almost three-quarters of a million refugees whose re-establishment or resettlement the United Nations has undertaken. Economic commissions have been established to aid in the reconstruction of those areas of the world devastated by war, and to-day and every day four million children are being fed by the Children's Fund of the United Nations.

The campaign to raise funds by voluntary subscription for the relief of children in the war devastated countries is meeting with outstanding success. Our own government has contributed five million dollars directly to the International Children's Emergency Fund and an additional \$400,000. to the present voluntary campaign.

These contributions, including those that are so generously made by individuals, are not only a splendid demonstration of humanitarian and charitable sentiments but they will also serve as an additional arm in the cold war against the threatening spread of communism. They will help to inspire and confirm confidence in the realistic nature of that common front for freedom which is now being consolidated.

This is still of course a very troubled world and the present menaces to our safety and our freedom are grave and the difficulties to be overcome are substantial but, in our own land, we have achieved mutual confidence and domestic security in spite of great difficulties.

There is still hope that men and women of good-will can achieve the same results in the wider field of international co-operation by reminding themselves that what is best for all, - and there can be no question that peace and security are best for all - will also be better for each than anything which armed conflict could possibly win.

We have enormous resources and we have great and powerful friends. Let us all have the will and determination to make it clear now that we, and those who are with us, intend to stand together and with that will and determination, I feel confident that the high and noble purposes of the United Nations Charter can still be fulfilled.

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