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An address by the Prime Minister, Mr. St. Laurent, on his recent trip to Europe and Asia, delivered to the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Press, in Toronto, April 28, 1954.

When I received an invitation last October from your President, Mr. Thomson, to speak to you at this annual meeting dinner of the Canadian Press, I replied that I would be happy to be present if no urgent public business prevented me from doing so. Fortunately, no urgent matter has arisen to keep me away from this meeting, but I confess that when I sat down to prepare my notes for this evening's remarks, I almost wished something had happened to keep me from having to make any kind of a speech.

I realized, of course, you would expect me to say something about my recent world tour; and I had thought last October it would be quite easy to find something interesting I could say about it.

What I did find was that it was far from easy to do that. I realize I could not just repeat the chatty and informal report I had made to my colleagues in the House of Commons the day after I got back to Ottawa. Anyone who chose to has already had a chance to read Hansard, and if you haven't and I would not blame you for not doing so, I know you have all read the excellent reports your own Canadian Press representative, Mr. William Stewart, sent back home every day we were away from Ottawa.

Those reports were written with the special knack and skill of a good newspaper reporter while the events were still news. I could not expect you to put up with reports that were no longer news, from one who lacks the skill and experience of a reporter.

Now even though Mr. Stewart's good reporting has made my task this evening more difficult, I do take great pleasure in expressing to his employers my appreciation of the fine job he did.

Of course, I also had experiences which were less ephemeral than the day to day events that were reported in the press. These experiences were the very interesting and, I believe, very valuable, confidential conversations I had with the political leaders of the various countries I visited. But those conversations had to be confidential; and all I can say about them is that I was happy to find that they confirmed the impression I got everywhere and from all sources that there is an

abundance of goodwill in all the countries I visited for Canada and Canadians, and that we have a splendid reputation to live up to. I found that all our representatives abroad, unofficial as well as official, are doing excellent work for Canada.

Perhaps without being in any danger of drawing upon "off the record" material I can say something about the impressions I brought back from my short visit to the Asian nations of the Commonwealth, India, Pakistan and Ceylon, both as to our own relations with those countries, particularly our participation in the Colombo Plan and, also, as to the place of the great Indian sub-continent in world affairs.

I hope you will not feel I am so conceited or so fatuous as to think that I could see enough in that short visit to provide a foundation for conclusions that would have any real value. But I did start out with some background information derived from quite a lot of reading about the countries I was going to visit; and I am relying upon what I did see only as a spot check or sampling which has given me a clearer appreciation of what I had learned from books and despatches and reports from others with far more experience than I could hope to gain in a brief visit.

One important fact we all know from statistical reports is that there are more people in India, Pakistan and Ceylon than twice the combined population of the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada. But it is one thing to read that the population of the Indian sub-continent is about 445 million people and quite another to see something of how they live and work and conduct their common affairs.

We in the Western world are apt to think of world affairs in terms of the free nations of Europe and North America on the one side and the Communist-dominated world on the other. I suppose it is natural for us to think of South and Southeast Asia as an area whose people also have to choose one side or the other in the so-called "cold war" and who should be just as much concerned about the outcome of that cold war as we are.

No doubt the consequences of a Communist victory over the West if that could happen would be very serious for the peoples of Asia in the long run, but it is not reasonable to expect the peoples of Asia to see the importance of these matters from the same angle that we do.

What has happened to countries like Poland, Czechoslovakia, Eastern Germany, Austria and other nations of Eastern Europe is something that had real meaning for us, but the enslavement of these countries cannot have the same immediate significance for the vast multitudes of these people of Asia.

Many millions of them may never have even heard of most of those countries and they have had very little contact and not much experience with Soviet Russia at any time. It is equally true that they know little about North America, but they do know that the main language used in North America is English and that most of its people are of Western European origin and their

memories of their relations with Western Europeans are not altogether happy. It would be less than frank to say that their experience with European domination has left them without any suspicions even about us in North America. And it is important for us to realize that the peoples of Southern Asia, because they have had so little direct experience of Russian Imperialism, Communist or otherwise, are not inoculated as we are against the false ideas and illusory promises of Communist propaganda. On the other hand, they are apt to associate the whole Western world with the former Imperialism they resented so deeply and unless we can show them that we really want to be their friends and to treat them as equals we can hardly expect to enjoy their sympathy and enlist their support -- for the kind of peaceful world we are seeking to achieve.

Nevertheless, the nations of Southern Asia are bound to play an increasingly important part in world affairs. For some time I have been deeply impressed, and I am sure you have too, with the great and growing importance of these ancient Eastern civilizations which are striving to adapt themselves to this twentieth century.

It seemed clear to me that their power and influence would be certain to increase, and that in terms of our own self-interest we should seize every opportunity that presents itself to strengthen the bonds of goodwill and mutual understanding with them. Canada has a special opportunity because, like these nations, we too have emerged from a colonial status to a status of equality in the Commonwealth, and that common experience is itself a basis for mutual understanding.

My visit was certainly a rewarding one to me. I found traditions and achievements going back thousands of years which make our own history seem, by comparison, like a creation of yesterday. I was struck by the realization that the spiritual and philosophical insight, which has always been one of the glories of the East, is still a living reality.

And side by side with this ancient cultural inheritance are the new forces which are beginning to stir Asia in this period of history. The most powerful of these is a national sentiment, and closely associated with it, the insistence on the recognition of racial equality. In every part of the East this double force is at work driving men in new directions. One feels that in every part of the East the desire for national independence goes hand in hand with a new sense of the dignity of the individual and the equality of all men, regardless of origin or colour.

This feature of the Eastern scene is one which we in the West can neglect only at our peril. The peoples of Asia, who have so recently thrown off what they consider the last vestiges of colonial domination, are determined to manage their own affairs without interference. And I am confirmed in the view that no long-term solution of Asian relations with the West will be possible which does not carry with it full recognition of the common human brotherhood of all men in all countries.

The desire for a more distinct national identity and this new sense of the importance of the individual present a great challenge to the new Asian nations of our Commonwealth. One of the most important tasks with which they are faced at the present time is to assure an adequate supply of food, clothing, and shelter to meet the minimum basic needs of their many millions of human beings. It is by assisting them to meet this challenge, and at the same time encouraging them in their effort to achieve the goals I have mentioned, that we can demonstrate our friendship and goodwill toward them. Even before my recent tour, I had frequently asserted that we could not afford to overlook these vast areas of Asia, where mass poverty prevails and where there is not much use in talking about the abstract advantages of political freedom to men and women who are perpetually hungry.

If we hope to have real security in the world -- and unless it is world-wide we are not apt to have it for ourselves -- I am convinced we must, in a true spirit of equality and co-operation, join in a world-wide concerted effort to help the peoples of Asia secure greater material advantages and the hope of a better future for themselves.

One of the ways -- and there are several both official and non-official ways -- in which we in the West are helping our Asian friends is through the Colombo Plan. I was told that the assistance that we have given under that Plan to Pakistan, India and Ceylon over the past three years is of outstanding importance at this stage in their development.

A basic feature of the Colombo Plan is that the recipients themselves choose the projects on which the funds are to be spent. Of course, there are consultations at every level, and the government which is supplying the funds for a particular project must feel that it is justified in spending taxes paid by the people it represents in the way that is suggested. But it has been agreed, and it is accepted in practice, that the Asian peoples themselves should decide how the monies can best be spent to serve the purposes of the Plan.

Another important feature of the Plan is that, as far as possible, assistance should not be a temporary expedient which would at most afford relief of a temporary situation, though a lot of that has had to be done and has been done. But as a general policy each contribution is made with the aim of enabling the recipients eventually to improve their facilities to meet their own needs. Otherwise this assistance would do nothing but help meet the temporary emergency and would not really contribute towards the higher productivity the peoples of these nations must achieve for themselves.

In Pakistan, for one instance, we are helping to construct a cement plant. At a cost of about five million dollars a plant and machinery will be manufactured in Canada and erected at Thal by a Canadian contractor. The entire project will be completed in two years and the annual production of 100,000 metric tons of cement will be used to provide housing and irrigation

canals, which will in turn make it possible to improve the living conditions and increase many times the production of the huge Thal valley.

At Peshawar in Pakistan, I met Mr. A.E. Palmer of Lethbridge, Alberta, who has been in Pakistan for about two years now, as the Director of the Provincial Agricultural Research Stations for the Northwest Frontier Province. He explained the work that is being done in that area and gave me quite an encouraging report. He said he was confident that through seed selection and improved methods the Pakistanis in that area will be able to double or even treble their yield of wheat and also diversify and increase the production of other crops.

In Peshawar I also met a Pakistani engineer who is in charge of the construction of the Warsak Dam project to which we are contributing. He showed me a model of the dam which is being built on the Kabul River not far from the famous Khyber Pass which we visited.

He and some of the Canadian engineers working on this project told me that a huge triangular area of over 93,000 acres will be reclaimed for agricultural purposes and that 155,000 kilowatts of electrical energy will be produced each year.

A project somewhat similar to the Warsak Dam in Pakistan and with similar aims is the Mayurakshi Dam in India.

Torontonians will be interested particularly in a contribution of $4,500,000 to the Bombay State Transport system. This money was spent on buses and trucks, which were shipped from Canada and which were very badly needed to permit the economic system of the area to function better. Of course the citizens of Bombay still have a long way to go to attain the standard of the residents of this city who can boast of the first subway in Canada, and, I understand, one of the most modern in the world; but in Bombay, as in Toronto, improved transportation is as much needed and helpful contribution to greater economic efficiency.

I learned a great deal about the work which is being done in the very fertile, tropical island of Ceylon from another Canadian, Dr. G.P. McRostie, of the Ontario Agricultural College of Guelph. Dr. McRostie is the Acting Head of the Department of Agriculture at the University of Ceylon, and is in the process of setting up a fully modern department there, complete with the latest scientific equipment.

I mention only a few of the many projects which are being carried out in Southern Asia to help the peoples of that great sub-continent improve their living standards and achieve a more reasonable level of human welfare and decency.

I would not like you to get the impression that the Colombo Plan of itself will solve the problems of Asia. Far from it. Half of our total national budget spent in aid and assistance, if it could be properly spent that way, would not even scratch the surface. All these developmental projects are only a small addition to the

vast amount of work which will have to be done by the people themselves to improve the economies of Southern Asia. What these projects do is to give sympathy, encouragement, example and incentive to these peoples in their tremendous undertakings of help themselves.

The greatest need is to improve agrucultural processes and increase food production and inevitably the great bulk of that work must be carried out by the people themselves. While we can assist, the people who live in those countries must--and they want to -- control their own destinies and work out their own salvation.

Since I got home on March 17 I have read a most interesting article, "Irrigation and India's Food Problem", in the March issue of the Canadian Geographical Journal which I commend to all of you. It is written by the Rev. R.M. Bennet who was for years an engineer officer in the Indian Army and later a Baptist missionary in India and is now Secretary of the Canadian Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

He concludes with these words:

"This is the beginning of a new age in India. It can be an age of very great advance. India is the acknowledged political leader in India. If we in the West have the courage of our convictions and the imagination to grasp this day of opportunity with sympathy and understanding, by standing with India, it could mean the expansion of freedom and opportunity for a greater proportion of the world's population than ever before".

The people of Southern Asia, like the people of Canada -- and the average person is not much different the world over, he had the same hopes and aspirations -- these people are engaged in a high enterprise of national development. To carry that enterprise to a successful conclusion they too need stability and peace in the world. I said a moment ago that Westerners were regarded with suspicion in Asia but that does not mean that the people there do not want peace and stability as much as we do and are not willing to work with us in achieving those ends, once we can convince them we are on the right road. But we cannot expect them to assume that our way is always the right way.

The views of the governments and peoples in Southern Asia on the way they can most usefully help to maintain world peace are not all identical with the views of the government and people of Canada on the efforts which Canada can most usefully make.

But we should not forget that until we signed the North Atlantic Treaty, we in North America had generally held the view that it was preferable not to make precise commitments in advance as to the action we would have to take if ever there was an outbreak of war. That was our traditional position until six or seven years ago. That seems to be India's position now. And I do not think we in Canada have any more right today to urge India to change its policy than we had in June 1940, when the Western world was crashing about our ears, to urge the United States to change its policy. We hoped for a change and we expected that

utlimately there would be a change, but we felt it would not help to try to tell the people of the United States that we knew better than they did what they should do in their own best interests.

The countries I had the privilege of visiting are in the throes of what we hope will continue to be a peaceful revolution and they are, so far as I could gather, determined to make their revolution by democratic and peaceful means. The leaders of those countries are apt to succeed only if the masses of the people see with their own eyes that their economic and social conditions are improving and are likely to continue to improve.

I have seen something of the poverty of an average Indian village. I walked through the muddy lanes of such a village and into the dark mud houses. I went on to visit a village nearby where a community project had been established and where the villagers, with government assistance, were working together to improve their living conditions and to increase their production. There were already clear evidence of great improvement.

I began to realize what a stupendous undertaking it is to raise the living standards of the 300 million villagers of India. But I also began to understand that the magnitude of this task should not be thought of in terms of one nation comprising 300 million villagers but in the more manageable terms of 500 thousand separate villages. That is a lot of villages but each one of these villages in an individual community and the plan is for each individual community to do for itself what has been done in each of the already improved villages. It can be done provided each gets the same technical assistance from the government, and, in particular, provided it gets the help and inspiration of an enthusiastic and dedicated local official.

The enthusiasm and determination and realistic approach of all the planning authorities, both central and local, is such as to justify the hope that these ancient nations will succeed in their war against the poverty, the diseases and the ignorance so widespread amongst those great masses of our fellow human beings. The cost of their victory is that war is bound to be great. As Mr. Nehru said of his own country, this generation of Indians must accept a life-time of hard labour, but it is apt to be very rewarding labour.

The task of these countries will be immeasurably easier provided there is a reasonable level of peace and stability in the world, and provided we in the West do lend a helping hand and do display in our dealings with them sympathy, insight and understanding.

Of course it is only too true that in the East there is poverty, poverty more estensive and more pervasive than anything we in the West have known for centuries. But one also sees much beauty, beauty of old buildings, beauty of the countryside, beauty of the people themselves. One sees in some of the devoutly religious Asian people, serenity seldom seen in the West.

I venture to suggest that one of the best ways we can make sure that serenity becomes a more common quality than it is now is to try to understand the people of the East and treat them as we ourselves want to be treated. We will thus be helping to enlist their sympathies in the great struggle to strengthen the prospects of keeping this a world where men and women of every continent can live their lives in freedom and in peace.

We in the Western world have been striving, in the partnership of the North Atlantic alliance, to make secure for our own and future generations the freedom we believe is the very essence of civilized life. In this age of hydrogen bombs with their threat of total destruction for organized human society, we must of course put our ultimate trust in the designs of a benign Providence, but we must also do our best to help ourselves towards the peaceful triumph of sanity and freedom in the world..

That is why we have felt it so necessary first to achieve and then to maintain adequate strength to deter aggression. But we also to continue to develop and to defend freedom and to keep proper perspectives in our own countries, and thus demonstrate the superiority of our way of life, not only for the Western world, but also for the countless millions in Asia.

And we have to do this, while continuing to live in a shrinking world alongside the great nations behind the iron curtain where years of intellectual, social and political servitude may have undermind the aptitude and perhaps even the desire of many for what we regard as essential personal and national freedom. And we must do it with the knowledge of the existence and availability of atomic weapons and of their terrifying distructiveness.

In the face of all that there is no short and easy way to make the world what we would like it to be or even to make our own freedom absolutely secure. We must continue to build up and to maintain our strength but we must not forget that the purpose of that strength is not to seek a propitious moment to start a third world war with all its horrors and mass destruction but to do our part to deter others from starting one.

Mr. Eisenhower said recently in a speech to the American Newspaper Publishers Association that never has there been a more compelling and rewarding time than the present to labour for a co-operative peace based upon international understanding. One way for us to do our part toward that goal of international understanding is to build up and retain the goodwill and friendly confidence of the great new nations of Southern Asia.

They are our partners in the Commonwealth; a Commonwealth of free and equal nations of many races and many continents. I venture to repeat about this partnership the words Mr. Bennett used about our relations with India. "It could mean the expansion of freedom and opportunity for a greater proportion of the world's population than ever before".

I hope, with my whole heart, that it will.

S/C