

GOVERNMENT



OF CANADA

## STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION  
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 57/29

### "SOUTH EAST ASIA AND THE COLOMBO PLAN"

Excerpts from a speech by Mr. Nik Cavell, Colombo Plan Administrator in Canada, to The Toronto Rotary Club, May 24, 1957.

...Since the dawn of civilization, man has fought hard and continuously to maintain his freedom. His enemies through the ages have been a horde of totalitarian dictators of many colours and creeds. The freedom we enjoy today has come to us through the medium of the broken bodies and minds of millions of incredibly brave men and women who have died in the torture chambers of these dictators. It has come to us through the dead and wounded of many wars, the latest being the two terrible World Wars we have been compelled to fight to defeat the domination of the latest would-be, world-dominating dictators. It comes to us through the tragic story of that magnificent, futile, recent fight of the people of Hungary using only their courage and their bare hands against the mighty tanks and guns of the world's latest form of the totalitarian dictator. This fight, gentlemen, and the freedom it has won for us is our greatest heritage.

I believe that human freedom is menaced today just as much as it has been through the ages but the menace today is more complicated, more difficult to comprehend and therefore less felt and realized than it has been in the past when the world was a less complicated place to live in.

The great question confronting us is; Are we going to be able to hand over to our children a world in which human freedom has been strengthened and in which it can continue to grow until all doubt of its ultimate survival has been wiped out? Or, are we, through inertia and lack of understanding, going to make it necessary for our children's children to pass through the hell of the dictator's torture chambers and endless wars to enable them to stay free as we are free today? The success of the free, democratic state rests in the end on the knowledge, understanding and common sense of its people.

One of the facts we must face is that we, the white race, are a minority on this earth. The majority is made up of Africans and Asians and although these people are not powerful today in international politics, they are on the march and the direction of that march is as much our concern as it is theirs.

The Colombo Plan concerns South and South-East Asia and so it is about that area that I want to talk. We cannot understand its condition today unless we glance at history over the last fifty years. The peoples of South East Asia entered that period almost entirely under the domination of Western powers. This is a fact which still colours their thinking and their political concepts. They were affected, as we were, by the rise of Germany as a military totalitarian state; they were affected by the revolution which brought Communist Russia into being; they were affected by that turbulent period between World Wars I and II, in which disintegration of the world pattern began to take place and which culminated in terrible World War II which defeated one set of totalitarians only to give more scope to another. Above all, we must consider the difference in the effect of that war on Europe and on Asia.

Europe came out of World War II devastated; her lovely cities in ruins, her factories largely destroyed, her trade at a standstill. But Europe still had men who knew how to operate factories; her labour force of trained technicians had been depleted but not destroyed. What Europe lacked was the capital to rebuild her factories and re-start her trade. That capital was supplied by the United States through the Marshall Plan. That plan saved Europe from utter chaos, restored her vigour and enterprise and prevented the Communist forces from taking over even more countries than they already had.

When one turns to Asia, one sees a very different picture. The Japanese had driven the Western colonial powers from many countries and they had occupied them... When at last the Japanese were defeated the countries they had occupied were in a state of economic and political chaos. Then some of the Colonial powers tried to take some of them over again. The people resisted and war again ravished them. When, after these struggles, peace finally came, many of these countries were so disorganized and weakened that they have not even yet been able to tackle the problems of hunger and the raising of the living standards of their poverty-stricken millions.

The old India was not occupied by Japan but the withdrawal of the British and the severe consequences of the partition out of which the Moslem state of Pakistan was born, burdened both these states with millions of refugees whom they have had to support from their slender income and try to rehabilitate and resettle. All this chaos in South-East Asia was particularly

causing alarm within the Commonwealth where India, Pakistan and Ceylon - all members - were struggling alone with the problems of their newly independent states.

As we have seen, the United States was occupied in Europe and it was decided that the Commonwealth Foreign Ministers should hold a meeting in Colombo to review the desperate situation of the South-East Asian Commonwealth countries. Thus, in January 1950, the Colombo Plan was born.

The objective of the meeting was to review the broad economic aspects of the international situation with special regard to South and South-East Asia. It was pointed out that the area comprised at least 600 million people, which was one-quarter of the population of the world, and that those people had long felt the pressure of poverty and hunger. It was felt that the realization of self-government in the area made possible a new approach to that problem and that the new sovereign governments, through a vigorous development of all their resources, could obtain a fuller life for their people. The various governments of the area, and particularly India, Pakistan and Ceylon, had prepared development plans which formed a basis for action.

It was recognized from the outset that the funds which were required for the effective development of the area were considerably more than could come from the area itself or from Commonwealth countries only outside the area. Plans were drawn up for development over a six-year period from the middle of 1951. These plans were for capital development in the area and for a technical assistance scheme.

This Colombo meeting had considerable significance. It was the first time that all the Foreign Ministers of the Commonwealth had met in Asia, and it was the first time that India, Pakistan and Ceylon attended such a meeting on a basis of complete equality and with a background of absolute sovereignty and self determination.

The Colombo Plan, as envisaged, called for five billion dollars of capital over the six-year period of the Plan and at least three billion dollars of that had to come from outside the area.

The donor Commonwealth countries agreed to make capital contributions towards this three billion dollars. Over the six-year period, the UNITED KINGDOM agreed to assist by the release of blocked sterling balances held by the receiving countries; it is estimated that these releases will amount to roughly 42 million pounds a year. AUSTRALIA agreed to contribute at least seventy five million dollars over the six-year period. NEW ZEALAND said she would put up the equivalent of three and one-half million pounds over the first four years of the Plan, and has since continued to contribute. CANADA agreed to give twenty-five

million dollars each year, plus four hundred thousand dollars for technical assistance. This has since been increased: first to \$26,400,000, and last year and this to \$34,400,000. The operation of the Plan has now been extended to June 1961.

Now, let us see what the Colombo Plan has actually done so far. I would like to be able to go into detail today on what our Commonwealth partners - Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand - have done and also to touch on the interchange of technical assistance between the Asian countries themselves, but time does not allow me to do this and therefore I will confine myself to what Canada has done, or, in other words, what we have done with roughly \$165 million of the taxpayers' money which the Government has granted us.

The Canadian contribution to the Colombo Plan has been divided into Capital Projects and Technical Assistance. To deal with the latter first - Technical Assistance is perhaps the most vital need of the underdeveloped areas. Probably the first thing a Canadian child falls over when learning to walk is its mother's vacuum sweeper and then, throughout its childhood and its education, it becomes acquainted with automobiles, electrical appliances of all kinds, and through these contacts, our children acquire a surprising amount of technical knowledge and efficiency. They become part of the new mechanical age. By contrast, all the Asian child learns is how to twist a bullock's tail to obtain more speed out of him. The result is that technical development is seriously held up in these areas for the want of technical people of all kinds and before much can be done, this deficiency must be dealt with. Also, the Asian countries are very short of administrative staff, both in the field of business and government. It is for this reason that we have so far brought about 1,070 trainees to Canada for various courses. We try to get key people who can return to their various countries and teach others what they have learned. In addition, we send out Canadian experts in various fields of endeavour to set up training centres and to try to solve problems in the area itself, and some 130 of these experts have gone from Canada to work in many countries.

Now, let us consider the Capital Projects side of our work. On this side, we have tried to enter into projects which are of a fundamental nature. We must remember that we are dealing with very poor agricultural countries, with vast numbers of unemployed and under-employed people. The need is to diversify their economies, to provide employment and to process their agricultural output and to enable them to exploit their natural wealth. At the same time, we have tried to keep our contributions Canadian in character. There have been 69 such projects so far and others are in prospect. Needless to say, I can only describe very few of them today.

Canada is probably as experienced as any country on earth in power development. That is where development starts. Without power nothing much can be done, and so you will not be surprised to hear that power development projects have figured largely in our programme. Because the development of hydro-electric power involves the building of dams for the storage of the necessary water, this type of project serves two purposes: power is generated and irrigation is provided at the same time. Irrigation is a vital factor in the development of South-East Asia; it provides the means of a reasonable assurance of two, and sometimes three, crops a year against the uncertainty of even one when dependent entirely upon rainfall, which all too frequently fails. Such failures have given rise to terrible famines throughout Asian history and these famines have resulted in literally millions of deaths from starvation. Gradually, these conditions are being overcome and these countries are working towards the day when they will grow enough food to feed their people without the drain of finding foreign funds to purchase food abroad.

The aid field is by no means an easy one in which to work. What we have to try to do is to adapt advanced Western techniques to Asian conditions, which is not always easy for Western-trained engineers. For instance, during the four months' visit to South-East Asia from which I have just returned, I saw such things as our atomic reactor - perhaps the most modern piece of equipment one could build today - being erected by hundreds of women carrying cement up ramps in baskets on their heads -- a method of construction thousands of years old. But with a huge unemployed population, every chance must be taken to give employment.

The very fact that we are carrying out these projects some 3,000 miles away makes them difficult, but we are getting them done - the Mayurakshi Project in West Bengal is a good instance. This project will enable 400,000 tons of food to be grown by irrigation, will generate 4,000 kw. of electricity and be a major contribution to what was a very poor area made poorer by a particularly unruly river now under control. The electrical generating equipment which we supplied will be used to make electricity for a large range of cottage industries which will give employment to cultivators when they cannot get on the land. It will also make possible a large amount of agricultural pumping and the processing of much agricultural food. And so I could go on talking of other similar irrigation and electrical generation plants: UMTRU in Assam, KUNDAH in the Nilgiri Hills of South India, DIESEL SETS which will generate in small towns and large villages not now near a grid system. Then these towns and villages are linked to a grid, these diesel sets can be passed along to other communities and thus serve as stop-gap power in many places where otherwise development would be seriously retarded.

I should like particularly to mention THE WARSAK PROJECT which will generate 160,000 kw. of power and will also do a considerable amount of irrigation. It is on the North West Frontier of Pakistan, very near the famous Khyber Pass. This has been a very difficult project, very largely because for centuries it has been a very difficult region. It is situated in the tribal area between Pakistan and Afghanistan, inhabited by the Afridis, the Pathans, and many other tribes made famous by Kipling and other writers. For centuries, this area has been a grave problem. Fundamentally, the difficulty is that the barren hills in which these people live do not yield them a living and therefore they have always been raiders, fighters and a people made hard, tough and independent by centuries of great hardship. Many years ago, I lived amongst these people as an administrator and like practically everyone who has had contact with them, I came to admire their qualities and to love them as men of character. The Government of Pakistan is understandably concerned about this frontier with Afghanistan. It is close to Russia and Pakistan has done all it could to bring greater stability into the lives of these tribesmen, particularly as attempts are being made to have them set up a new independent state, which they talk of as "Paktoonistan", which obviously would not be strong enough to stand alone and, therefore, could easily be brought under foreign dominance. What we are doing at Warsak, therefore, is to help the Government of Pakistan to reconstruct the lives of these frontier tribes on a sounder basis. The Warsak Dam Project will particularly help the Mohmand, Mullagori and Afridi Tribes - others will also benefit. The supply of power will help the industrial development of the area and give employment. Irrigation will cover 100,000 acres and increase food production by at least 60,000 tons a year. To help settle such a turbulent area, to bring some benefit to 4 million people is something dynamic for Canada to do and well worth the difficulties of carrying through this project.

Well, gentlemen, so much for the Canadian contribution of \$165 million, mostly spent on the training of Asian people by bringing them here or sending experts there; on the supply of electrical power, on irrigation and agricultural schemes; on communications, railway and road; on fishing and other projects, directly or indirectly connected with food production which is still the greatest necessity of most, if not of all, these backward countries. And last, but not least, on an ATOMIC REACTOR for India, which has a corps of brilliant young scientists under the great Indian scientists Dr. Bhabha who will develop power reactors for his country.

Now, let us see for a moment what other organizations of the free world are working in the aid field.

## UNITED NATIONS

The ideal of aid to the underdeveloped areas was embodied in the United Nations Charter itself. Under the Economic and Social Council, the United Nations specialized agencies now working in South and South-East Asia are:

- (1) The International Labour Organization
- (2) The Food and Agriculture Organization
- (3) UNESCO (The U.N. Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization)
- (4) The World Health Organization
- (5) The International Civil Aviation Organization
- (6) Children's Emergency Fund
- (7) The Technical Assistance Organization.

## UNITED STATES

Our great neighbour to the south has done much in the aid field through the medium of the MUTUAL SECURITY ACTS of 1951 and 1952 and the Agricultural Trade Development Assistance Act, operated in the past by the Point Four Programme and then by the Foreign Operations Administration, more commonly known as FOA, and now under the International Cooperation Administration.

The United States has poured millions of dollars into the South East Asian area for aid alone, leaving aside other millions for defence. It operates under a series of agreements with the various governments of the area and these agreements cover a vast field of endeavour aimed at giving these people the knowledge and technical processes which have served to make the standard of living on the North American Continent so high, and thus make it possible for these underdeveloped countries to start to raise their own standards. The United States is now a full-fledged member of the Colombo Plan and therefore its operations form a part of the whole Colombo programme.

## THE INTERNATIONAL BANK FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT:

The International Bank has made loans of many millions of dollars which have made major development projects in South-East Asia possible. It has sent many highly qualified people on missions to the area to help local governments and officials in working out programmes. The Bank's reports and published documents are of inestimable value, not only to those countries concerned, but to all of us who work in the difficult field of aid to underdeveloped areas. I wish I had time today to give you some idea

of the extent of the Bank's loans and the work it has done in a very business-like and extremely helpful way.

That, I think, gentlemen, about sums up the aid to underdeveloped countries in South and South-East Asia being given by the major aid agencies of the West. But we must also mention the work being done by agencies such as the Ford Foundation; by universities, particularly some in the United States which have undertaken to aid some particularly poor ones in South-East Asia and have taken them under their wing; then there are the Rockefeller and Carnegie Foundations also doing their bit.

Confucius once said; "An empty stomach does not dwell on high principles", and the first task facing the Governments of South-East Asia is to feed, house and clothe their poor people. As civilized and compassionate human beings, we can only be appalled at the poverty, economic uncertainty and disease from which so many of them suffer today. Through plans such as the Community Projects Scheme in which the better-educated young people go out into villages to teach peasants better ways of living and farming, they are waking up their people to the attainment of better living. We cannot rehabilitate these people; we can only give assistance to their governments in doing the job.

Two great experiments are going on; in China, roughly 600 million people are trying to raise their living standard by following the ways of Russia; in India, roughly 400 million people are trying to do the same by parliamentary democracy. The whole of Asia is watching these two countries to see which will do the most for its people in the shortest time. We dare not let democracy fail. We cannot build a strong free world unless we can make it habitable for the millions of Asia who have not yet made a final choice.

I shall close this talk, as I have many others, by letting one of the greatest philosophers of our time say it all so much better than I can possibly do - Alfred North Whitehead in one of his many profound books said this;

"Every age has its character determined by the way its populations react to the material events they encounter. This reaction is determined by their basic beliefs, by their hopes, their fears, their judgments of what is worth while.

They may rise to the greatness of an opportunity, seizing its drama, perfecting its art, exploiting its adventure, mastering intellectually and physically, the network of relations that constitute its being. On the other hand, they may collapse before the perplexities confronting them. How they act depends upon their courage and their intellectual grasp."

That, I think, beautifully sums up our problem. Have we the intellectual grasp necessary to understand our world and if we have, have we the courage and the fortitude necessary to bring into being all that will be necessary to keep it free?

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