

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES



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IN THE FREE WORLD

An address by the Prime Minister, Mr. L.S. St. Laurent,
at a special Convocation at the University of Western
Ontario, London, on March 7, 1951.

....This Convocation is being held on Founders' Day of this University. Founders' Day might be an appropriate occasion to look back to the beginnings of the institution; to consider its development and growth over the years; to assess its worth and value for the community of which it is a part; and, most important, to look to the part which it can play in the future of our great country. But as most of you are far more familiar with the history of Western than I am, I do not think it would be wise for me to attempt that task.

There is, however, one aspect of the history of Western University - its more recent history - of which I feel I should make special reference. I refer to the Summer School which Western holds each year at Trois-Pistoles in my native Province of Quebec. I think it deserves special attention because it is a first rate example of what I conceive to be one of any University's principal roles - that of promoting better understanding and closer co-operation between the different social groups that make up a nation.

At Trois-Pistoles English-speaking Canadians have the opportunity of living with people who speak another language and whose religion, customs and traditions are different from their own.

There they learn to speak the French language. Their lives are enriched by living amongst a people of a different culture and they absorb and in turn they dispense a deeper understanding of that partnership of two historic races which is the foundation of our national life.

That partnership really began with the union of the two Canadas one hundred and ten years ago. At first it was an uneasy union - somewhat of the shot-gun type - but I believe most Canadians have come to value it today as a genuine partnership which does enrich us all. The Summer School down on the Lower St. Lawrence has helped to create that better understanding and thereby to foster more happy relations. In doing so, it is strengthening the partnership and keeping our nation's foundations strong.

It is about this role of the University - the University as an interpreter and a mediator - that I wish to speak today. The need to increase understanding and co-operation amongst the peoples of the world, to interpret

nations to each other is obvious. It certainly is the aim and need of all peace-loving peoples. To achieve a greater measure of mutual tolerance, even if it is only on the basis of "live and let live" is the prime task of world statesmanship. But it is a task which should occupy the attention not only of those who are in public life. The Universities, whose purpose is to seek after truth and to interpret the past to each new generation, have an important part to play in this task of teaching peoples to live with each other.

Even where there is relative freedom and where there is no tension and distrust, it is not easy to create real understanding between nations and even between groups within nations. In the world of today with an ideological struggle going on between the free way of life of the Western world on the one hand, and Communist imperialism on the other, the problem is much more difficult. The very existence of this struggle - in reality a struggle for the minds of men - emphasizes the important part which Universities are capable of taking in the solution of the problem.

This division in the world today is not of our asking. It is the result of the threatening expansion of international Communism. It exists because the rulers of one part of the world are not willing to permit the rest of us to live our lives in our way. It is the result of their subversive attempts to overthrow our institutions and to impose upon us by force an alien and materialistic regime under totalitarian control. The struggle is being waged on all fronts. We have been calling it the cold war, but it is more accurate to view it as a war of ideas, in essence the struggle of freedom for survival.

Most of us in North America and an increasing number of people in Europe and even behind the Iron Curtain are well aware of the importance of the issues at stake. Having seen what others have lost, we know better than ever today what we would stand to lose, and that knowledge has increased the resolution of all free peoples to bear heavy costs to maintain their freedom.

But there are, especially in the nations of South and South-East Asia, a vast number of people who lack our western experience of political freedom and who are not sure which way they should turn. Amongst those peoples of Asia there has been in recent years a strong impulse towards national independence and individual freedom. There is also an increased consciousness of their relative poverty in material things and a growing desire to improve their standards of living. These Asian peoples want both to improve their material lot and to run their own affairs. To them the system they have lived under for several generations has not been a happy one. Many of them never had self-government, and they have little experience of the benefits of individual freedom, and they have therefore had little opportunity to see that real freedom does provide the best and most satisfactory way of life. They know little, too, about Communism but it promises them a better standard of living and does give lip service to freedom. We know all its promises are false. But the Asian peoples have not had the same experience of Communism or the same opportunities to observe what really happens when the Communists take over as we have in the Western world. Up to now, there has been no Czechoslovakia in Asia.

If we are to win the struggle to preserve even our own freedom we must not allow Communism to overrun the whole continent of Asia. To avoid that, we need the active sympathy of Asian peoples and we are not likely to have it unless they can be convinced that the friendship of the West is of greater advantage to them than anything they can expect from the Communist alternative.

Of course, an important part of the grand strategy of Communist imperialism is to stir up strife between Asia and the West. While giving lip service to the ideal of national and individual freedom for the peoples of Asia, they are really twisting human needs and aspirations to the service of their world strategy. This is one of the most sinister and dangerous aspects of this Communist strategy.

Now we have to ask ourselves what is the best way to gain and keep the friendship and goodwill of the Asian peoples, and to prevent them from becoming the victims of Communist expansion.

But before I deal with that question, I should like to say something more about the problem of containing Communist imperialism in the West. In the North Atlantic area, as you know, twelve countries including Canada have banded themselves together into an alliance to build up sufficient strength to discourage Communist aggression in Western Europe. The purpose of this North Atlantic alliance is not to start a war; it is to prevent one by making it plain to any possible aggressor who might consider attacking any one of us that he will have to face us all and that he will have little prospect of ultimate success.

The part which our country is to play in the Atlantic alliance has been mapped out. It is proposed to have Canada's army and air force participate in the European integrated force, and to have our navy share in the defence of the North Atlantic ocean. We are also training aircrew for our North Atlantic partners and we are to make substantial contributions in the production of defence materials not only for ourselves but for our allies.

While our general role has been agreed upon it is always subject to change. In times like these we have to be able to adapt our plans to suit the vagaries of the international climate and to meet any emergency that may arise. On these grounds alone the building of our alliance into a strong and lasting bulwark of peace is not a simple task.

And I do not need to tell a University audience that history shows it is always difficult to hold an alliance together. There are twelve nations in the North Atlantic Treaty, most of whose people speak different languages and have varying backgrounds, cultures and outlooks. The people in each of these nations inevitably look at problems from their own point of view. Several of our Atlantic partners are only just started on the road to recovery after undergoing the ravages of the most terrible war in history. They cannot be expected to make the same kind of contribution to the common strength as their more fortunate allies. Now, in every alliance, there are bound to be comparisons between the efforts of one nation and those of another. And too often such comparisons lead to misunderstandings and recrimination.

Here I suggest is a place where Universities can perform a very useful service to the peoples who have joined together to preserve the peace by sound and considerate interpretation of each one to the other. On a small scale at Trois-Pistoles, this University has been interpreting one part of our nation to another part. On a larger scale by spreading knowledge of each other, by the exchange of ideas and of personnel, by the diligent pursuit and the dissemination of truth, Universities generally should be able to make an invaluable contribution to cementing the alliance of these twelve North Atlantic Treaty nations for the preservation of their common freedom.

I am confident that each of the partners is resolved to do its full part in contributing to the combined strength which is required to hold back Communist imperialism. But the task will be that much easier if we all know more of what the other is doing, if we can appreciate more fully the difficulties that lie in the path of our allies and if we can come to understand the reasons they have for doing or not doing certain things which others might think they should be doing or refraining from doing. I am sure that, in this field, the Universities can make a very real contribution to the attainment of peace while remaining completely faithful to their true ends.

The provision of this combined strength by the North Atlantic Treaty nations to deter aggression is our first objective. If we succeed in establishing that combined strength - and I believe we will - Communist imperialism is apt to refrain from aggression against any of the twelve nations concerned; and that happy situation is apt to be reflected in other parts of the world as well.

But this will by no means be the end of our task. We must also try to convince the people over whom these ruthless men exercise control that they have nothing to fear from us unless they themselves attack us, but that if we are attacked we are prepared to defend as something worth more than all else - the right to order our own lives in our own way. This might sound academic to a peasant in the Ukraine who knows nothing of well organized political entities but the fear of the secret police. Nevertheless the fact remains that so long as a totalitarian dictatorship over vast numbers of people remains armed to the teeth, there is going to be tension in the world and no nation will feel secure.

The Universities have their part in this situation too. It is particularly difficult when there are so few practical contacts between the western democracies and the Soviet world. But some ideas do get through and our Universities can help to see that they are the right kind of ideas and that they reflect the true nature of our free way of life.

There remains the problem which I mentioned earlier of showing the Asiatic peoples now struggling to improve their existence that co-operation with the free nations of the West on a basis of genuine equality and human brotherhood has much more to offer them than the promises of Communism. We have no desire to impose our type of civilization on the people of the East. It probably would not suit them anyway. Their own civilizations are older than ours and there is much we have to learn from them. All we want to

to do is convince them that neither of us has any valid grounds to look down upon the other and that just as we accept them as our equals we want them to accept us as their equals; and to build up genuine co-operation with them on that basis.

The peoples of South and South-East Asia are faced with tremendous material problems, about which we can be helpful. If they don't overcome their difficulties, Communism-imperialism, though it is a much more efficient form of oppression than any they have ever known before, will likely be the system under which they will be governed. This menace of Communism in Asia is real, and it gives urgency to the problem of bringing about improvement and prospects of improvement for them as rapidly as possible.

We already have made a beginning in providing assistance to the people in this area of the world. The Colombo Plan drawn up by the governments of many of the countries concerned and by most Commonwealth nations is an imaginative step, but it is only a first step in the right direction. Under this scheme the nations who will benefit are to contribute largely from their own resources, but lands like Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom, which are more fully developed materially, have also agreed to assist in economic development and in the provision of technical assistance. Of course, the success of the Colombo Plan depends upon adequate participation by the United States. The prospects for such participation are reasonably good. Our government is accordingly going to propose to Parliament that the sum of \$25,000,000 be provided this year for the Colombo Plan on the understanding that there is also effective participation by enough others to assure for the plan, reasonable prospects of success.

One aspect of the Colombo Plan is the training here in North America and in Europe of personnel from Asian countries and the provision of experts from this continent and from Europe to train Asians in their own countries. It is obvious how useful the Universities can be in a practical scheme of this character. But their part must not merely be to provide technical knowledge and know-how. Useful and necessary as these may be, Universities can help to give a better understanding to our Asian friends of our Western way of doing things and conversely can help us to achieve a clearer knowledge of the customs and traditions of these ancient civilizations.

What I have suggested thus far means heavy responsibility not only for the government and people of this country but specifically for our Universities. I believe our Universities will welcome that responsibility. Some might say that I am suggesting our Universities should concentrate on a propaganda effort in the cold war. If by propaganda we mean the distortion of the truth, what I am really suggesting is the exact opposite. We can leave distortion to the Communists. The best propaganda to serve the cause of the free world is the truth. What we need in our country is knowledge of other countries; what others need is knowledge of us. With truth, with knowledge, I am convinced understanding will come largely of itself. In seeking to interpret nations to each other, the Universities will not only be justifying their existence,

they will, in fact, be helping to ensure their continued existence as citadels of freedom.

In times like these when the very foundations of free society are threatened the task for the Universities is a heavy one. Its effective discharge is bound to impose heavy burdens on their material and their moral resources.

But if that task is approached in the spirit in which this University has conducted the summer schools at Trois-Pistoles, I am convinced the University of Western Ontario and its sister Universities throughout Canada will make a notable contribution to that understanding between Asia and the West which seems to me to be absolutely indispensable to a peaceful world.

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