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STATEMENT BY MR. HEATH MACQUARRIE, M.P.,
IN PLENARY, ON THE SITUATION WITH REGARD
TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION
ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL
COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES
NOVEMBER 23, 1962

Last year, when Resolution 1654 (XVI) was adopted, the Canadian Delegation recognized that it was logical and sensible to create machinery for the purpose of examining the application of the 1960 Colonial Declaration and making suggestions and recommendations on the progress achieved in implementing the Declaration.

That Declaration is rightly regarded as an historical document. It expresses in the clearest terms the very strong desire of this Assembly to hasten in every way it can the movement to independence which has been one of the most exciting and important features of the times in which we live.

My Delegation sees no need to feel dissatisfied with the steady progress which has been made in the past two years towards its implementation. Seventeen new members joined the United Nations in September and October, 1960, at the beginning of the fifteenth session. Because of pride in their independence and their desire that the movement should not lose its momentum, these new members played a most decisive part in bringing about the adoption of the Colonial Declaration by an overwhelming majority of the Fifteenth Assembly on December 14, 1960. Since that date the United Nations has welcomed ten more newly independent member countries. Several more are on the verge of independence.

Canada voted for the resolution setting up the Committee of Seventeen on the understanding that the function of the Committee was to scrutinize the progress made in applying the principles of the Colonial Declaration, to offer suggestions on the practical steps that should be taken in particular territories, and to report back

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to the General Assembly at the present session.

As has been made clear on other occasions, the Canadian attitude to the problem of ending colonialism is based on a number of considerations:

First and foremost is Canada's concern that fundamental human rights and freedoms should be fully respected throughout the world, including the national right of self-determination and the freedom of the individual from discrimination on grounds of race, colour, creed or political belief;

Second, Canada wishes to do all it can to promote the evolution from colonial rule to full self-government and independence for all dependent peoples who desire that status, at a rate of development governed only by practical considerations of internal stability. Canadians believe firmly in the policy of "the good start" -- the creation of a viable economy with a solid base of trained administrators;

Third, it is the opinion of the Canadian Government that the Declaration on Colonialism is intended to apply throughout the world;

Fourth, each remaining colonial territory has its own special problems and its own conditions. The United Nations approach should, therefore, be pragmatic. Different methods must be applied to fit the circumstances of each case;

Fifth, the administering authorities cannot share or shift their responsibilities for dependent peoples under their control. If the United Nations is to contribute to orderly evolution it must take account of these responsibilities as well as of the aspirations of the inhabitants of the colonial territory concerned.

The Special Committee has pursued its difficult task with vigour and determination. My Delegation is particularly happy to pay tribute to the ability and wisdom of the Committee's Chairman, Ambassador Jha of India, whom we have recently welcomed as his country's representative in Canada.

The Committee has done a great deal of useful work in its investigation of the issues involved in the areas which it has studied. The scope of the report shows the magnitude of the problems still unresolved. The experience of the Committee clearly demonstrates that progress in this most important and complicated field can best be achieved in a spirit of accommodation between all parties concerned. Whenever it has been possible to reach a consensus, the Committee's proposals have pointed the way to practical progress.

Unfortunately the Soviet Delegation used the Special Committee's deliberations as an opportunity to put forward extreme proposals on colonial territories, which were known to be unacceptable to the administering power, rather than to find practical solutions to existing problems. Mr. President, the subject with which the Committee is concerned, the achievement of self-government by dependent peoples, is too important to be used as a means for scoring meaningless victories in Committee debates, or for the passing of resolutions which have little or no prospect of being carried out.

The Committee on occasion adopted resolutions addressed directly to the Administering Power. This, in our view, goes beyond the mandate of the Committee, and is a most undesirable development in terms of the authority and prestige of the General Assembly. The Committee should confine itself to reporting to the General Assembly. If it believes that the situation in a particular territory demands urgent consideration by the Assembly it is at liberty to say so; the Assembly can then take action if it sees fit under the procedure for holding emergency or special sessions. In any case, the responsibility for making direct recommendations to the Administering Powers should remain with the General Assembly.

Having made these comments, I should like to emphasize that my Delegation feels that the fundamental idea which led to the creation of the Committee of Seventeen is a sound one, namely that there should be some body, responsible to the Assembly, which has the duty of weighing and evaluating the progress achieved in carrying

out the Colonial Declaration of December 14, 1960. The only alternative, and one which we consider impractical save in special circumstances, would be the creation of a number of subsidiary bodies each with a limited and particular mandate. This would raise serious problems of coordination. There would also be a real danger that the proliferation of special colonial committees, with widely varying compositions, could lead to uneven reports and be wasteful of both effort and funds. The latter would be particularly objectionable at a time when the United Nations is trying to economize its resources of manpower and money.

As regards the individual recommendations made by the Committee of Seventeen, my Delegation does not wish to comment on them at this time. Some, such as the recommendations on Northern Rhodesia and British Guiana, have been overtaken by events. The General Assembly has considered and acted upon the conclusions and recommendations regarding Southern Rhodesia. As for South West Africa, this question has already been examined by the Fourth Committee.

The result of the South West Africa debate which has just concluded in the Fourth Committee is proof of the essential unity which can be realized, even on a difficult colonial issue, when a serious and patient effort is made to take account of various points of view and thus to maximize the area of agreement. For similar reasons, we continue to believe that the consensus procedure is the method of work best suited to the Special Committee. It allows full play to all members, enables the majority view to be clearly and forcefully expressed and avoids the need for formal votes which would often divide the Committee.

In pursuing its work in the immediate future, the Special Committee will continue to devote most of its attention to the problems of applying the Colonial Declaration in African territories. We recognize the validity of the Committee's decision to give priority to the remaining areas of colonial rule in Africa. That continent is the location of some of the most complicated problems which remain to be solved.

The Special Committee recognizes, in paragraph 151 of its report, "that it has by no means completed the task entrusted to it by the General Assembly and that there are many more territories concerning which the implementation of the Declaration remains to be considered". This conclusion is fully sustained by actual situations which exist in many parts of the world but which are not confined to any one geographical area. Understandably, in recent years there has been emphasis on Asia and Africa because those are the areas in which the stirring march to nationhood has surged forward at a quickening pace. It is the very fact of great progress in these areas which has stimulated and concentrated international interest in developments there.

But this Assembly has recognized and the Special Committee of Seventeen must be aware that, like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and like the Charter of this Organization, the Declaration on Colonialism was intended to be universal in its application. The appropriate Assembly resolutions on this subject offer no exemption and admit of no exceptions. The rights and freedoms set forth in the Declaration extend to subject peoples everywhere. This, in the Canadian view, should be the basic approach of the United Nations to the implementation of all Declarations and Resolutions of the General Assembly dealing with fundamental rights and freedoms. It is their universal application without distinction that we should keep in mind. And, having regard to its established methods and priorities, the Assembly should act to ensure that degree of application.

In our approach to colonialism, all of us here should recall that the historical factors which contributed to the establishment of Belgian, British, Dutch, French and German imperial systems in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, led at the same time to the establishment of a Russian empire under which long-established cultures and whole nations were made subject to foreign domination. In the course of that development, colonialism spread from Europe, not only across the oceans but also over wide stretches of land.

Moreover, in modern times, we have witnessed a second surge of Russian imperialism. Free countries, established by virtue of the right of self-determination which was promoted at the end of the First World War, have been swallowed up by the Communist empire.

But this is not merely a matter of history, obscured by the passing of time. It is an essential part of the problem which we are discussing today and which we have discussed in this Assembly on many earlier occasions and under various items. It is the problem of the universal application of rights and freedoms proclaimed under the general authority of our Charter.

In the pursuit of these great Charter principles and purposes, this organization has been instrumental in bringing freedom and independence to many nations. The record since 1939 shows that 44 nations, with a total population of over 840 million people, have attained independence. Their distinguished representatives today play an important part in our deliberations.

But what about the position of subject peoples within the Soviet empire? Assessments may vary but there are about 96 million people under Soviet rule who have never been permitted to exercise the right of self-determination which the U.S.S.R. so loudly proclaims for others. It is a unique and disturbing phenomenon at this time in world affairs, when one of the highest aspirations of mankind is the peaceful and orderly evolution to viable freedom for all dependent peoples, that the U.S.S.R. should continue to deny the rights of free election and expression to subject nations under its domination.

It is all the more disturbing because the actual developments within the Soviet empire are so completely out of tune with the protestations of Soviet propaganda. Directly following the Soviet revolution, much was made of Communist belief in the right of self-determination. During the early twenties, independent states did spring into being in the land mass now dominated by Russian Communists. The nationhood of separate peoples in that broad area was, however, quickly extinguished as soon as the Communist party leaders in Moscow realized that those states were intent

on protecting from Kremlin interference their political freedom and their cultural and linguistic heritage.

With callous disregard for earlier recognition of the independence of those states and with no thought for the treaties of friendship and non-interference legally binding between them and the U.S.S.R., the Red Army was deployed to subjugate many small but proud nations. And so it has been that, even in the period of progress elsewhere, that is since 1939, the U.S.S.R. has incorporated over 260,000 square miles of additional territory with a population of 22 million people. Employing tactics devised in the earlier revolutionary period with some refinements of more recent times, the Soviet empire in the last 23 years has absorbed the Baltic states, the Kurile Islands, South Sakhalin, Tannu Tuva (formerly a part of Mongolia), certain Finnish provinces, certain Polish provinces, Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina (formerly belonging to Roumania), East Prussia and Ruthenia (formerly a part of Czechoslovakia and predominantly Ukrainian in speech and culture).

Moreover, this spread of Soviet domination has always been accompanied by a systematic suppression of political nationalism in the subject areas and by the subversion of long-cherished cultures, languages and religions. And when resistance proved stubborn, the U.S.S.R. used deportation as a method of consolidating its rule. No less than seven minority nations were deported from their native regions and it was not until 1957 that any pretense was made to restore to some of them even a token of their deprived rights.

This is but a small part of the Soviet record of tyranny. And it is a sorry record for a nation holding great power status in this Organization. It lays bare the reasons why the U.S.S.R. and its supporters spend so much time in United Nations debates criticizing and condemning the actions of others.

It explains why the Soviet representatives on the Special Committee of Seventeen have engaged in tactics which could have no purpose but to disrupt the work of the Committee. Clearly Soviet representatives were seeking to cover, with a smoke screen of

violent attacks against the Western powers, the ugly realities which exist within the sphere of Soviet imperialism. To divert attention from its own evil practices, the U.S.S.R. has long preached against the sins of others.

In keeping with its own tradition and outlook, Canada has warmly welcomed the steady development toward independence during the last two decades. We have sought to promote that development by exerting our influence in the direction of accommodation and orderly progress. We have been glad to assist the new nations to find a firm footing in economic and social stability.

Therefore, we cannot but deplore that the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, which has marked this period of United Nations achievement, has not spread to the areas under Soviet domination. The contrast between the record of the Western powers and that of the U.S.S.R. is clear for all to see. And the discrepancy between Soviet protestation and Soviet performance is no secret. We need look no farther east than the Berlin wall to see the determination with which the U.S.S.R. seeks to isolate the oppressed people behind the Iron Curtain from the contagion of freedom.

The views which I have been expressing reflect no new departure on Canada's part. Speaking in the general debate of this Assembly in September 1960 the Prime Minister of Canada sharply contrasted the record of the Western European powers with that of the U.S.S.R. Mr. Diefenbaker had the opportunity then to call on Chairman Khrushchev to make good his many professions of concern for the rights of dependent peoples by granting to the nations under his domination the right to choose their own leaders and form of government through free and secret elections. At that time the Canadian Prime Minister said - and I quote -

"Indeed in this Assembly the membership is composed in a very considerable measure of the graduates of empires, mandates and trusteeships of the United Kingdom, the Commonwealth and other nations.

I pause to ask this question: how many human beings have been liberated by the U.S.S.R.? Do we forget how one of the postwar

colonies of the Soviet Union sought to liberate itself four years ago, and with what results?

I say that because these facts of history in the Commonwealth and other countries invite comparison with the domination over peoples and territories, sometimes gained under the guise of liberation, but always accompanied by the loss of political freedom. How are we to reconcile the tragedy of the Hungarian uprising in 1956 with Chairman Khrushchev's confident assertion of 23 September 1960 in this Assembly? Mr. Khrushchev said:

'We have stood, we stand, and always will stand, for the right of the peoples of Africa, just as those of other continents, to establish whatever regime they may please in their countries on attaining their freedom from colonial oppression.'

That I accept--and I hope that those words mean a change of attitude for the future on the part of those he represents.

What of Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia? What of the freedom-loving Ukrainians and many other Eastern European peoples which I shall not name for fear of omitting some of them? Mr. Khrushchev went further and said, in the same meeting:

'... Complete and final abolition of the colonial system in all its forms and manifestations is demonstrated by the entire course of the history of the world in recent decades.'

There can be no double standard in international affairs.

I ask the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. to give to those nations under his domination the right of free elections--to give them the opportunity to determine the kind of government they want under genuinely free conditions. If those conclusions were what his words meant, for they must apply universally, then indeed will there be new action to carry out the obligations of the United Nations Charter; then indeed will there be new hope for all mankind."

I need hardly add that the U.S.S.R. did not respond to this invitation. No evidence has come to the United Nations to suggest an easing of the intolerable situation in the Soviet empire.

Consistent with the position outlined by the Prime Minister, the Canadian Government has continued to urge that the focus of

United Nations attention be brought to bear on conditions within the Soviet empire and more particularly on the denial of human rights and fundamental freedoms. These conditions should be placed in the context of all Assembly discussions about these rights and freedoms and about the status of dependent peoples everywhere. Our aim is to provide perspective for the strident demands which the U.S.S.R. makes on behalf of others for rights and benefits denied to subject peoples of the Soviet empire.

Mr. President, there can be no dispute that the Declaration on Colonialism is intended to apply throughout the world. There can be no denying that its implementation is far from complete. It is abundantly evident that the Special Committee of Seventeen has much useful work to perform in the future. If I have stressed, in this statement, the problem of Soviet imperialism, I have done so because, in the opinion of my Government, not enough United Nations attention has been paid to that problem in the past. When the United Nations is examining situations in many other areas of the world, why should it not turn its attention at some stage to the areas of darkness under Soviet rule? This Assembly has no cause to be selective in its denunciation of oppression.