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## The State of the Nations

IT is useful to look now and then at world affairs outside the context of the daily news. If we see them exclusively through the cable messages they become a succession of crises, or statements about crises which are expected to happen. It is scarcely possible to open a newspaper without seeing that somewhere the effects of the Second World War are still being felt, like outbreaks of fire from a conflagration not quite extinguished. This spasmodic view of the world's difficulties can be confusing and misleading. One good way of correcting it is to examine the annual report of the Department of External Affairs.

By the time this document is published some of the problems described in its pages have changed. In the period from April 1, 1953, to March 31, 1954, covered in the report recently before the House of Representatives, the changes have led sometimes to improvements, as in Indo-China; but the fundamental situation is unaltered. Sections on South-East Asia, Europe, the Middle East and Africa show the number and variety of doubtful issues, and beyond them the frontiers of the cold war between the Communist and Western Powers. Germany is still divided; and Austria, although not partitioned, remains without a peace treaty. The Canal Zone dispute has been settled, but unrest in North Africa and the border strife of Israelis and Arabs are disturbing the whole of the Middle East. The end of the fighting in Indo-China has not removed a trouble-spot; and in Korea the armistice has been followed by a political stalemate. And so it goes on, from Central Europe to China: a series of problems, many of them interlocking, which draws us back to the central dilemma of relations between East and West.

If that were the whole of the story, the outlook would be sombre. But in addition to describing the bad signs and the setbacks, the External Affairs report

shows what is being done to preserve and strengthen peace. There is continuous activity in two main directions. Treaty arrangements have been made, and are being planned; and within the general framework of United Nations the Powers that are grouped under Nato, the Anzus Pact and other defensive agreements, are working together on that broader front where ultimately peace must be made secure. It is true that treaties by themselves will not provide security. They are necessary precautions, without which the resources of nations with common interests could not be used effectively in a time of danger. But these diplomatic moves belong to a pattern of activity which includes also such enterprises as the Capital Assistance Programme and the Technical Co-operation Scheme under the Colombo Plan. Some of us may believe that the projects do not go far enough, that economic factors need a stronger emphasis, especially in South-East Asia; but the framework is there, and can be expanded.

Some truths of real importance have been learnt in recent years. Colonialism is dying; and in a period which sees a steady advance in international co-operation there is also a new growth of nationalism. On a superficial view this could seem a contradiction with fatal possibilities. But peoples in under-developed countries are moving towards self-government in a world where isolation is now physically impossible. And the international spirit has no strength unless it is fed from roots in countries where men are able to learn at home the meanings of human dignity. If enough time is granted, it will eventually be strong enough to break down barriers which seem to be intractable. That at least must be the hope of those who look, not only at unsuccessful or mistaken policies, but also at the work of men and governments whose aim is peace.

N.Z. LISTENER, SEPTEMBER 10, 1954.