

Strange If True

by V. B. Karnik

IN the last few days the press has carried a number of stories about Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan advocating a policy of electoral adjustments between the Praja Socialist Party and the Communist Party. Some startling observations have been also attributed to him. The typical was the following contained in a story published in the *Times of India* of August 8. The paper's correspondent stated: "Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan's interpretation of the post-Twentieth Communist Congress trends is said to tally with Mr. Ghosh's (Ajoy Ghosh, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of India) analysis of current Soviet policies." Mr. Jayaprakash is also said to have "obtained an assurance that the Indian Communist Party would have no truck with Moscow or Communist parties of other countries."

Giving a report of a two-day conference of the PSP workers held in Patna, where Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan is reported to have advocated electoral adjustments between the PSP and CP, a full page article in the communist weekly *New Age* triumphantly gives the following information: "Mr. J. P. is stated to have remarked that although he continued to differ from the communists in many fundamental points, yet he believed that at present a general heartsearching was going on in the Party..... Mr. Jayaprakash is reported to have opined that in view of the ideological differences with the communists, there could be no united front with them. But he 'personally' favoured electoral adjustments with the Communist Party as in the changed circumstances it was necessary..... But electoral adjustments should be achieved as a tactic to defeat the Congress by avoiding the division of opposition votes. He is also reported to have stated quite categorically that there could be no adjustment with the Jan Sangh or the Congress."

A few days later was published the news of the

Congress President's journey to Krishnagiri to discuss with Mr. Jayaprakash his reported support to the policy of electoral adjustments between socialists and communists. The discussion, it is reported, ended in failure. A report published in the *Times of India* about the discussions and a meeting of Tamil Nad and Malabar PSP workers stated: "Mr. Narayan is understood to have stressed the need for an electoral understanding between the Praja Socialists and 'less reactionary, non-Communal and non-Congress' political parties. Such an alliance, he is stated to have urged would ensure the return in the election of candidates belonging to really popular parties."

It is significant to note that Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan has not yet issued any authoritative statement clarifying his views. It is possible that the reports published are garbled or distorted versions of the statements that he might have made. In that case he owes it to his innumerable friends and admirers to state in clear terms his position on the various issues involved in the question and the advice that he is giving to the workers of the Praja Socialist Party. It is to be hoped that he will make such a clear statement at an early date. Until then comments are naturally to be based on published reports and if they are proved to be wrong, the comments will be gladly modified.

Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan appears to be advocating electoral adjustments between PSP and CP on the ground that the return of opposition candidates to legislatures in the next general elections is desirable and to secure that purpose a division of opposition votes should be avoided. It is undeniable that one single party should not be allowed to monopolise all seats in legislatures. It is desirable that there should be in the legislatures a good number of persons holding different views, standing for different policies and criticising the defects and wrong actions and policies of the ruling party. In that case, it will be desirable to seek adjustments with all opposition parties. If the purpose is to break the monopoly of the Congress Party, it will be served better by electoral agreements with all non-Congress parties, including the

Hindu Mahasabha, the Jana Sangh and others. Such agreements may enable the return of many more non-Congress candidates to the legislatures.

But Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan is opposed to any such all-embracing electoral adjustment. He is reported to be opposed to electoral adjustment with communal parties, such as the Hindu Mahasabha or Jana Sangh. This means that he is not merely concerned with the defeat of Congress candidates but also with some ideological considerations. It is very likely that ideological considerations, such as their traditional outlook, their opposition to social reforms and their alliance with vested interests, which prevent him from including the Hindu Mahasabha and the Jan Sangh in his policy of electoral adjustment.

What then are the ideological considerations which persuade him to adopt a different attitude towards communists? He has spoken of his ideological differences with the communists and they are plain to anybody who knows anything of Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan. How are the communists then nearer to him than the Hindu Mahasabha or Jana Sanghists? Are they not as a matter of fact more deadly enemies of freedom and democracy and of all that Mr. Jayaprakash holds near and dear? There may have been some justification in the thirties to regard the communists as the defenders of the interests of the people whose very enthusiasm for their cause has misled them into wrong paths. That myth was exploded a long time back. It is now established that they are the enemies of freedom and the worst exploiters of the toiling masses. It is moreover clear that they are the obedient tools of a foreign Power. How can any alliance with such professed advocates of a creed of violence and terror help the cause of freedom and democracy?

There is one more essential question which cannot be left out of consideration. How can one be sure

what will be the policies of the communists tomorrow? If their foreign masters give them new orders can there be any doubt that they will obey them without hesitation? To be effective, an opposition must have a common programme, which means that an electoral adjustment must develop into a united front. The history of united fronts with communists is replete with instances of how they betray and undermine other parties and utilise them for strengthening their own organisation.

Mr. Jayaprakash is reported to have opposed a united front with the communists. He is in favour of only electoral adjustments. But adjustments do not remain adjustments. They lead to common electoral campaigns and naturally, in course of time, to common activities on other issues and in other spheres. If it is right to support a communist candidate with votes, how will it be wrong to organise a campaign in his favour, to support him and his party in their activities, to invite their support to PSP candidates and generally for the two parties to work together in various spheres? Once the first step is taken, it will be difficult to avoid the other steps. In any event, the rank and file members of the PSP will not understand the subtle distinction and will feel called upon to join in common activities with the communists. The doors of the PSP will be thrown wide open to all manner of infiltration and subversion by the communists. The experiment was tried in the thirties in the Congress Socialist Party as it then was. Is it desirable to repeat the disastrous experience?

Mr. Jayaprakash appears to think that as a result of the disclosures about Stalin 'a general heartsearching' was going on in the Communist Party. Events will prove that the heartsearching, if any, has not produced any result. The communists, in India and elsewhere, will remain what they were, the slaves of an outworn dogma and the servile tools of an international conspiracy having its headquarters in Moscow. It is really an irony that while socialists and liberals in the neighbouring country of Burma are getting disillusioned about communists, socialists in India should think of cooperation with them. The experience of U Nu and the Anti-Fascist Peoples Freedom League of Burma provides a warning which Indian socialists will ignore only at great peril to themselves and the freedom of India.

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Notes

Chinese Troops Attack Burma

It was recently reported that Chinese troops clashed with Burmese Army units in a six-hour border battle which resulted in casualties on both sides. This clash was described by a Burmese Army Commander as a "major engagement".

There has been a dispute over the border territory between Burma and China. Besides this "major engagement", several clashes between Chinese troops and Burmese Army units have taken place in an area of about 120 miles east of Lashio, the terminal point of the Burma Road to China.

Actually, the reports state, the Chinese troops have crossed into Burmese territory, and the leading English language newspaper of Rangoon the *Nation* reports that "the Chinese Communist forces and Burmese troops today are facing each other at a distance of only 200 yards at many points" on Burmese territory. The Chinese penetration into Burma has been admitted by a *communique* of the Government of the Union of Burma. The *communique* stated: "The actual position is that some Chinese troops have entered Burmese territory and established outposts on Union soil in Wa State in close proximity to the Burma China border." The *communique* further states that the Burmese government is seriously concerned with this development.

All this means that the communist Government of China, euphemistically called "People's Republic," is little concerned with Burmese sovereignty over its own territory. If the Chinese Army penetration into Burma is linked with the subversive activities of communists within the heart of Burma whom the former Burmese Prime Minister U Nu recently described as "stooges" and "agents" of foreign powers, the picture becomes clear. The communists in Burma, with the help of the Communist Army from China, are bent upon undermining the freedom and the security of Burma with a view finally to dragging the Burmese people under the jackboots of communist dictatorship.

In view of this grave threat to the freedom and security of Burma, the Burmese government would do well to take all necessary precautions not only to drive the Chinese troops out of Burmese territory but also to meet the challenge, successfully, of the communist "stooges" and "agents" within. The internal enemy is much the more dangerous of the two.

• U Nu's Experience Of Panchashila

ON his 49th birthday, the former Prime Minister of Burma and President of the ruling Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League, U Nu, in a 6,000 word "call to cleanliness" to his party men, warned: "Methods of planting stooges and agents in small countries is being increasingly adopted by big countries and by

subversive means small countries are roped in. Our country has a liberal sprinkling of these stooges and hirelings. If political power were to pass into their hands, we are in for a fate more dreadful than the loss of our independence and the ordeal will have to be faced by the AFPFL members more than others.... Even now AFPFL members are singled out for ruthless massacres in areas over which stooges and hirelings hold their sway." It is obvious that U Nu refers to the communist guerillas as "stooges" and "hirelings" of big powers. The communist guerillas are fighting the Burmese government and Burmese people in certain parts of the country and thus undermining Burmese security and stability. A few days earlier, an important anonymous letter was published in the well-known Burmese daily newspaper the *Nation* under the caption "U Nu Resigns." In this letter, the correspondent made certain disclosures which have not been denied or disclaimed by U Nu or his colleagues. Quoting a reliable source, the correspondent said that U Nu would resign (the letter was published a few days before the actual resignation) due to "the alleged failure of his neutralist policy.... In the past few years U Nu has laboured hard to keep away from the entanglement of both power blocs and, as everybody knows, his one main objective in the field of foreign affairs was to establish economic and cultural relations with all countries irrespective of political ideologies." The correspondent points out that the way the Soviet and Chinese embassies functioned in Burma was extremely disappointing to U Nu — the embassies would invite those elements who were hostile to the Government to visit Russia and China "on this or that mission." According to the correspondent (and he substantiates this by reliable evidence), "the last straw which broke U Nu's back, so to say, was the reported financial help rendered lavishly by some foreign embassies in Rangoon to many opposition candidates in the recent general elections." These opposition candidates were either communists or near-communists and fellow-travellers.

It is thus apparent that Burma is paying heavily for its neutralist policy. The situation in Burma makes one thing clear that the communist powers are no respecters of neutral countries. They demand total submission to their influences and dictates, else they do not hesitate to undermine the stability and security of any country by instigating their stooges to breed chaos and anarchy from within till the country falls a victim to communist domination. The situation in Burma serves a warning to other Asian countries who follow neutralist policies. The sad experience of U Nu about the communist understanding of Panchashila may soon be the experience of other Asian leaders.

A Victors' Peace

SOVIET-JAPANESE talks over a peace treaty have again ended in failure. The failure highlights the fact that, in spite of smiles and sweet words,

there has been no essential change in the foreign policies of Soviet Russia.

The talks were deadlocked because Soviet Russia obstinately refused to return the Japanese islands seized during the war. That was her position two years back and, in spite of all the changes that are supposed to have taken place in Moscow, still continues to be her position.

The Foreign Minister of Japan, Mr. Mamoru Shigemitsu was constrained to say that Russia was still talking the language of a victor country. To refuse to return the islands "grabbed during the war" was, he said, "real power politics."

Over a decade has passed since the war ended. All other countries have signed peace treaties and established normal relations with Japan. Soviet Russia has failed to do that so far because she is not prepared to return to Japan the islands that she is occupying since the war. She insists on Japan giving up her claim to the islands as a condition precedent to the signing of a peace treaty.

This is a victor's peace which communist Russia is callously seeking to impose upon Japan. It is a pity that other Asian countries are merely looking on while one of them is being subjected to such coercion by Soviet Russia.

In The Communist Web

IT is likely that another Asian country, Laos, may soon fall a victim to clever communist manoeuvres. A few days back an agreement was reached between the Royal Laotian Government and the rebel communist Pathet Lao, by which the latter has been recognised as a legal party and assured participation in government and the army. A coalition government with communist participation has in many countries paved the way for a naked communist regime. It is very likely that the story may be repeated in Laos.

According to the Geneva agreement Pathet Lao was to surrender to the Royal Laotian Government and the northern areas held by it were to be incorporated in the rest of the country. In spite of the agreement, however, Pathet Lao continued its rebel activities and refused to surrender.

The result has been this new agreement signed between the Royal Laotian Government and the rebel communist organisation. The agreement gives Pathet Lao the opportunity to spread its tentacles all over the country, instead of being confined to the northern areas. This may enable the communists to gain by subversion what they were not able to get through armed insurrection.

As a result of the agreement, there is an immediate change in the international position of the country. The Royal Laotian Government has agreed not to enter into any military alliances or to permit military bases on its territory. This may eventually prove the first step in the direction of absorption into the communist empire. The latest straw in the wind is the news that a delegation led by the Prime Minister is shortly visiting China on a "good will" mission.

Christian Missionaries

THE Christian Missionary Activities Committee appointed by the Madhya Pradesh Government and presided over by Mr. Justice Niyogi has turned out a report which is manifestly unjust and unfair to Christian missionaries working in the country, both foreign and indigenous. As stated by the *Indian Civil Liberties Bulletin*, some of the premises it worked on were "wild" and some of the conclusions it has reached are "reckless."

The wildness of some of the premises can be gathered from the following sample:

"Evangelisation in India appears to be a part of the uniform world policy to revive Christendom for re-establishing western supremacy and is not prompted by spiritual motives. The objective is apparently to create Christian minority pockets with a view to disrupting the solidarity of the non-Christian societies, and the mass conversions of a considerable section of Adivasis with the ulterior motive is fraught with danger to the security of the State.

The manner in which the missionary movement goes on in certain places is clearly intended to serve some political purpose in the cold war."

One of the recommendations made by the Committee is for the amendment of the Constitution to restrict the right of propagation of religion only to citizens of India. The Committee forgets that many of the Fundamental Rights guaranteed by the Constitution are Human Rights available to all persons and not merely to citizens. To restrict the scope of any one of those rights only to citizens will be a retrograde measure.

There will be no dispute that proselytisers of any religion should not be allowed to take advantage of the poverty or distress of the people and that conversions brought about through force or fraud should not only not be recognised but should also be penalised. It is equally incontestable that suitable steps should be taken against those who under the garb of religion indulge in political activities.

A few missionaries may have misused their position and indulged in one or the other kind of objectionable activity. But it is wrong to generalise on the basis of a few instances and that is exactly the mistake that the Committee has committed. It has therefore presented a totally wrong and distorted picture of missionary activities in the country.

Dr. John Matthai, the Vice-Chancellor of the Bombay University and the former Finance Minister of the Government of India, struck the right note when he said: "No class of foreigners working in India during the past hundred years have by and large served the country with greater zeal and interest than missionaries—and whatever their failings, these are outweighed by what they have done in the cause of building up a self-respecting and self-reliant India." The Governor of Bombay, Dr. Hare Krushna Mahtab, is also of the same opinion. The missionaries, he said, "had made considerable contri-

bution towards the progress of the country and it was wrong to conclude that they were exploiting the unsophisticated and uneducated classes in backward areas."

Regarding the demand for exclusion of foreign missionaries, Dr. Mahtab said that, when the world was moving towards one religion, we should not think of closing the doors against the votaries of any religion and that by preventing them from coming to India we would be doing a great injustice to the backward classes.

"There was a time", said Dr. Matthai, "when India was a haven of refuge for people suffering religious persecution in other countries, in the same way as England offered an asylum to those persecuted for political reasons abroad. Surely, the advent of independence is not going to leave us less tolerant than we have been in the past."

We endorse the wise and forthright statements of the two distinguished statesmen.

Mr. Deshmukh's Disclosure

EVERYBODY has expressed regret over the resignation of Mr. C. D. Deshmukh, which has deprived the country of an able and conscientious Finance Minister. The resignation is all the more regrettable because it takes place on an issue of sectional interest. A person of such high eminence as Mr. Deshmukh was not expected to represent in Parliament or Government only the interests of his particular constituency or linguistic group.

Mr. Deshmukh's statement in Parliament explaining the reasons of his resignation raises some issues of grave import. Mr. Deshmukh has made the charge that the Cabinet does not function on the basis of collective discussions or decisions, but that decisions are made in a "cavalier and unconstitutional manner" by one individual or by a couple of them. The charge was denied, but the denial was feeble and unconvincing.

Mr. Deshmukh contended that the decision that was taken in regard to Bombay was "typical of the cavalier and unconstitutional manner in which decisions have been taken and announced on behalf of the Cabinet by certain unauthorised members of the Cabinet, including the Prime Minister." He further charged that the Prime Minister and a couple of other members of the Cabinet "have arrogated to themselves powers not delegated to them by the Cabinet as a whole."

But it is not only on the issue of Bombay or the reorganisation of States that the Cabinet has functioned in this manner. There are complaints that this is the normal method of its functioning. Mr. Deshmukh has also admitted the fact by saying that the way in which decisions on Bombay were taken was "typical of the cavalier and unconstitutional manner." The question then arises: Why did he put up with it so long? Why was he silent so long? He cannot plead the excuse that is open to others living in totalitarian countries.

Joint responsibility of the Cabinet is one of the

cardinal principles of parliamentary democracy. Joint responsibility does not mean the readiness to accept and stand by the decisions made by one individual. Joint responsibility demands joint discussion as well as joint decision. It is clear from the disclosure made by Mr. Deshmukh that neither obtains in the functioning of the Indian Cabinet. This is a grave defect which may, unless immediate steps are taken to remove it, cause irreparable harm to the growth of democracy.

A Collaborator's Confession

PIETRO NENNI, the leader of the "Italian Socialist Party", has been for years a consistent and trustful ally of the international communist movement. But with all his loyalty and trustfulness even he has found it difficult to swallow the Russian Communist Party's explanation that all the cruel and revolting things that happened during the Stalin regime were due to the personal qualities of the dictator.

Pointing out the defects of the system, Nenni writes: "A socialist regime is not only a certain method of production, not only the socialisation of the means of production but also the system of democratic guarantees of collective and individual liberty, without which everything becomes bureaucratic, everything becomes corrupted and (turns) into forms of police oppression."

These are welcome words coming as they do from a constant collaborator with the communists. Nenni should, however, realise that it is not collaboration with communists, but constant struggle against them which will create the "system of democratic guarantees of collective and individual liberty" which he now thinks must be preserved.

The Open Mind

THE lengths to which credulity can go is shown by the contribution of Rs. 5000 sanctioned last month by the Senate of Calcutta University for a "Students' Health Home" located in Calcutta.

Now, as it happens, the Home has been established by the All India Students' Federation and its Bengal Branch. The A.I.S.F. is a notorious front of the communist Party and is affiliated with that international communist organisation, the International Union of Students. The project is part of the effort to infiltrate and indoctrinate our students through so-called welfare and non-political activities.

Dr. N. K. Sidhanta, Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University, is a good democrat and we refuse to believe that he would have permitted this help to be given to the communist disruptionists of our student life if he had known the facts. The incident illustrates once again, how easily good men and institutions can be used for unworthy purposes where alertness is absent. Let not our minds be so open that our brains fall out!

The Elections And After In Indonesia

(From a Political Correspondent)

THE story of the formation of the first elected Indonesian Cabinet is as exciting as it is indicative of the forces which animate the politics of Indonesia today.

* The General Elections produced tremendous surprises. The adherents of the Masjumi and of the Nationalist Party were confident that their own parties would emerge as the dominant party. But both these parties succeeded in getting an equal number of seats, namely fifty seven, which were not many more than the fortyfive secured by the Moslem N.U. party, which was not much in the picture before the elections. The most threatening surprise was the success of the Communist party (the P.K.I.) which secured 38 seats, with nearly six million votes, and thus emerged as the second largest Communist Party in Asia. The emergence of the P.K.I. was indeed a portent.

It was obvious that no two parties could together command a majority and thus form a stable government. It was clear that three of these four parties had to come together to secure a comfortable support.

The Masjumi has a conscientious objection to join in with the Communists. The Nationalist Party, especially its older leadership led by Mr. Ali, was opposed to the Masjumi, although it had no conscientious objection to entering a coalition with them. The N.U. had no particular policies and no particular objections. The Communists, true to their ingrained opportunism, only wished to dominate or influence the Cabinet, preferably from inside but if necessary from outside.

The Communist plans perfectly suited the propensity of Mr. Ali to work with them. In fact, before the General Elections Mr. Ali had kept himself in power and buttressed his pro-Communist neutralism with the support of the Communists. Moreover, he was strongly opposed to the Masjumi.

The Masjumi, however, emerged with considerable strength. In fact, it was its right to be called upon to form the Government. It had emerged as the only national party, having won a majority of votes in ten out of the fifteen provincial divisions. President Sukarno, who obviously favoured the Nationalist and particularly Mr. Ali, nonetheless called upon him to form the Government on the ground that the Nationalist Party had secured more votes.

Mr. Ali could not think of forming a straight coalition with the Communists. A strong section in his own Nationalist party led by the popular politician, Mr. Wilopo (who was described to me as the "coming man of the Nationalist Party"), was irreconcilably opposed to a coalition with the communists. Besides, the Army that was responsible for Ali's pre-election downfall could not have acquiesced in this.

Although Ali could not think of altogether bypassing Masjumi it was strongly rumoured that he had plan-

ned to drop them within a few months.* He could not however do this without the support of the Communists. If he could not form a coalition with them, surely he could come to an understanding with them and secure their support from outside. He could invest this action with the talk of national unity.

He was indirectly helped in these plans because a considerable section of the Masjumi appeared to attach great importance to power and favoured entering the Cabinet in spite of the fact that it was supported by the communists. They perhaps did not view the possibility of their being later thrown out with undue seriousness.

Mr. Ali's apperception was upturned by a couple of unexpected developments. Mr. Natsir, the respected leader of the Masjumi, who was away in Sumatra, suddenly returned and told his followers not to countenance any government supported even indirectly by the communists. In the meanwhile the anti-communist section of the Nationalist Party had become cautious and watchful. All this had the effect of confounding Mr. Ali's plans.

A crucial part in this was played by Mr. Wilopo. As the second most important man in the Nationalist Party, he had a big hand in drawing up the list of the members of the proposed ministry. Mr. Sarino's name was included as Education Minister. Now Mr. Sarino is strongly anti-Communist and he is heartily hated by them. They objected to his name and threatened to withdraw their support.

In this, they neatly entered a trap. The anti-communists in the Nationalist Party considered this attitude as a challenge and questioned the right of the communists to dictate to their party in the choice of their men. This upset Mr. Ali's plans. Today, Mr. Ali's government exists with the Masjumi more or less firmly in the Cabinet and the communists expressly opposed to it.

It is not to be understood that Mr. Ali is an active pro-communist. All that can be said is that he is not anti-communist. He belongs to the generation of nationalists which worked jointly with the communists in the early days of Indonesian Nationalism and he cherishes a number of illusions about them and even a measure of affection for them. Moreover, he prefers to have their support for his pro-communist neutralism, which is not liked by the Masjumi. Today, the position is that there is no active pro-communist in the Indonesian Cabinet, whereas there are several in it who are frankly anti-communist.

It is also not expected that the present non-communist coalition will fall in the near future. As a leading Masjumi minister explained on one occasion, all the three parties in the Cabinet had made great sacrifices and adjustments for a common purpose and this was enough to keep them together.

Asian Writers' Conference.

by M. A. Venkata Rao

AN Asian Writers' Conference is being arranged to meet at Delhi in the latter part of December. A preparatory committee called by Messrs. Mulk Raj Anand, Baharsidas Chaturvedi and Jainendra Kumar met in Delhi from the 28th to the 30th of July with delegates from Burma, Korea, Nepal, China, India and Vietnam. Messages supporting the objectives of the Conference came from Ceylon, Indonesia, Japan, Pakistan and other countries. An Appeal to Asian Writers and a Draft Agenda relating to the present situation of literature in Asian countries, to the relation between tradition and the new conditions of Asian emergence, the question of freedom to the writer, of the writer and his trade and the question of cultural exchange between Asian countries were adopted. The Appeal asks Asian Writers to take stock of the situation after the retreat of European colonialism in Asia and restore the cultural links that had been so long broken among them owing to the domination of European empires on their life and destiny.

The Appeal says: "For hundreds of years Asia has been subjected to foreign domination and many strands of our traditional civilization were disrupted, integral ways of life disturbed or broken, our education systems perverted and our whole cultures sought to be debased."

This Preparatory Committee was addressed among others by Mr. V. K. Krishna Menon and was privileged to have been received by President Rajendra Prasad and Prime Minister Nehru.

A number of grave and far-reaching questions are raised by this move to summon an Asian Writers' Conference to consider the common problems of cultural exchange among Asian Writers in the present era of Asian emergence.

The object would be entirely laudable if there were no invisible strings attached to the present proposal by its sponsors who are clearly committed to Asianism as conceived by Moscow and international communism.

The proposal raises also the general cultural question whether there is an Asian Mind as such, comparable to the European Mind. The *Times of India* commented tentatively on this aspect of the matter in its editorial of August 6, 1956, without committing itself to any conclusion. But it contented itself by pointing out the possible value of an Asian Conference in breaking the isolation of Asian peoples from each other and re-establishing mutual contact and influences through translations of works and magazines introducing the works and personalities of Asian nations to each other through translations. The suggestion to develop an Asian language was dismissed, rightly, as fantastic.

The general question whether there is an Asian Mind as such needs closer study and interpretation

at a later stage when scholarship and mutual cultural acquaintance have proceeded much further. Certainly, there is a *prima facie* case for the recognition of such an Asian Mind if we take into account only the higher traditions of China, Japan, Korea and India, permeated as they have been by Buddhist ideas and values. A large time-and-space span, a keener and all-prevailing consciousness of the spiritual dimension in human life, a sense of the harmony of all existence attunement with which in all the relations of life constitutes wisdom and salvation seem to be ingredients common to Eastern nations. This excludes Islam from West Asia which has more affiliation with Judaism and Christianity in world outlook and human values.

But it is not this vista of scholarship and sensitive interpretation of the soul of Eastern cultures, that brings any uneasiness to the idea of an Asian Conference.

There is reason to think considering the sponsorship of the Conference and the composition of its preparatory committee, that this Conference is an ambitious attempt at organising and mobilising Asian Writers as "a Front" of the Communist Movement which has its own theory of the role of Asian culture and its spokesman in the world struggle between itself and the Western Powers.

The Communist Movement is intent on using the appeal of great and moving ideas and ideals to different groups or interests in society for its own purpose. By sponsoring an Asian Writers' Conference, it expects to increase its hold on the imagination and sympathies of the writers as a body who will thereupon naturally come to look upon communist leaders as leaders of worthy causes entitled to their trust and regard. The Communist leadership will expect to cash in on such an asset in their favour when the time seems ripe to them to make a bid for the seizure of power. This is all laid down in the books of Lenin and Stalin who call such Fronts by the name of "communication belts." The influence generated in fields remote from politics is communicated or made to flow into political support for the communist cause when the time comes.

As the classics of communism and the practice of communist countries show beyond any shadow of doubt, the view of culture that is prevalent in the Iron Curtain countries is worlds apart from that of the free world. Mao Tse-tung explains that his new democracy or people's democracy should have its own type of culture, even as the old capitalist system of policy and economy in the past had its own. Thus Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism with their scheme of human values are being uprooted and the new "communist culture" is being taught through a resolute indoctrination in Red China today. The methods are those of "conditioning reflexes" and authoritative hypnotic suggestion reinforced by mass

conformity and intimidation, as is abundantly revealed in the regulations of the Government of Peking and in the principal newspapers of mainland China themselves.

Mechanical uniformity, regulation of ideals and methods by ruling groups in all spheres of art and literature, science and social thought, the denial of freedom to the thinker and artist to follow his own vision without let or hindrance are all admitted characteristics of "culture" behind the Iron Curtain.

By participating in this proposed Asian Conference, Asian Writers may be (unwittingly so far as the majority are concerned) helping to accelerate the coming of such a regime in their midst.

For the doctrine of the Communist Front is clear that the leading place should be taken by the Communist Party of the USSR in directing the cultural movement of all conforming countries and groups by virtue of its privileged position as the pioneering Communist State and the Fatherland of World Revolution. Thus we have the same sort of control of mind and heart in all the East European Countries and in Red China.

The sponsors of this Conference say in their appeal that the cultural integrity of Asian nations was destroyed under recent European domination. Without challenging the element of truth that may lie in this statement, it must be pointed out that the destruction of cultural integrity under Communism is much worse, being more consciously intended and scientifically planned for. Witness the deliberate attack on the strength of family sentiments in China by the new rulers. There is a crucial difference between the ideas of cultural freedom in the free world and in those in the Iron Curtain Countries.

The culture of the free world is expected to maintain its individuality through healthy exchange and

free assimilation of the best from each other. Asianism under freedom will be maintained through free exchange and contact. But under communism it will be attained through uniformity brought about through dictation from above. The one attains unity or similarity through free grasp of universality but the other manufactures an artificial unity through planing off all diversity through official decree and force.

Since, after the formulation of the policy of co-existence or Pancha Shila, pro-communist organisations have attained a new status of official recognition in this country, it may seem ungracious to point out the background of Front organisations like the present Asian Writers' Conference.

In the interests of truth and national security, however, it is incumbent on all those who are aware of the techniques of the Communist movement to declare their warning in public.

The suspicion that this Conference is of the character of a Front is strengthened by the inclusion of the name of Soviet Russia in the proposed Secretariat of the Conference (*New Age*, August 12). It is past comprehension how the Soviet Union is to be regarded as an Asian Nation especially suited to help in organising this Conference to the exclusion of European African and American nations.

In this context, it is necessary to bear in mind the testament of faith made by Mr. Charles Morgan, International President of the P.E.N. when it was proposed that P.E.N. Centres should be opened in communist countries. (*Freedom First*, March 1956, p.9) He said that writers in those countries are not free to write in accordance with their conscience and should not be admitted to the association of P.E.N. writers.

Innocents At Helsinki

THE credentials of the International Conference of Journalists which met at Helsinki are unclear. But if reports are to be believed, its sponsors created considerable misgivings in some quarters by the manner in which they got some known liberal journalists to participate in it. There is, for instance, good reason to believe that some among these journalists were persuaded to participate in the conference because the initial list of invitees included names of well-known independent liberals from Britain and America. Walter Lippmann and Alistaire Cook, according to one report, were listed among those who were said to have consented to attend. Why these independent liberals eventually refrained from attending the conference or why their names were initially listed in the conference's circulars, presumably without their previous consent, are matters on which more will obviously need to be heard. Meanwhile it is significant that the conference has issued a call for unity of international journalists—between the organizers of the Helsinki Conference and the Inter-

national Federation of Journalists whose headquarters are in Brussels.

Superficially, the call for unity of international journalists' organizations is innocuous. But observers of the operation of fronts organized or inspired by the communists will not fail to notice that the suggestion is similar to that issued some time back by the World Federation of Trade Unions for a united international body of the working class organizations of all the countries. The object of issuing the call for unity is the same in both the cases—to penetrate, infiltrate and expand into the democratic world. The bid is to penetrate into the agencies of information and education, which the press ultimately is, in the non-Communist countries. Put forward in the name of press freedom and of freedom of communication, the plea secured the ready sanction and blessings of the liberals among the delegates.

Admittedly, the credentials of the Helsinki Conference notwithstanding, its decisions should be assessed on merits. Its plea for objective coverage of news

(Continued on page 11)

An Open Letter To A Fellow-Traveller

The following is an open letter addressed to Mr. Howard Fast, a prominent fellow-travelling American novelist, by Mr. Eugene Lyons, the distinguished journalist and author of *Assignment in Utopia* and other books. The letter is reproduced in a slightly abridged form from the New Leader of New York as it could have been as well addressed to fellow-travelling intellectuals of this country. It will be recalled that Mr. Fast wrote a very critical article about the whole episode.

Dear, Mr. Fast:

Your Column in the *Daily Worker* of June 12, dealing with the terrible revelations in Nikita Khrushchev's "secret" speech at the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, attests your shock, despair and, most encouraging, your sense of personal guilt as a long-time Communist.

You call the speech "a strange and awful document without parallel in history... a record of barbarian and paranoid blood-lust that will be a lasting and shameful memory to civilised man." You reproach yourself for not having known the facts and for failure to protest against certain iniquities about which you did know.

Then you swear by "all that is holy" (though what is holy to a Stalinist?) that you "will not fail again" to exercise your critical judgement on things Soviet, and specifically you make this public pledge: "Never again will I accept the 'clever rationale' which appears to make sense but under scrutiny does not."

Some people have dismissed your statement as chicanery—a piece of tongue-in-cheek "self-criticism" prescribed by the Party itself for this difficult moment. I think they are mistaken. To me the column rings true. I believe it must ring to others who have known, in their time, the anguish of a cracking faith and bankrupt hopes.

Your column is filled with routine communist self-deceptions. All the same, it seems to me an act of courage and contrition by a man deeply troubled. What is more, it is quite evident that the Khrushchev confessions brought to a focus secret doubts and rebellions which have tormented you for some time. Your sigh of relief at the end of the essay—"And with this said, I feel better—better than I have felt for a long time"—makes this clear enough. It's a cry from the heart.

That is why I have decided to address you, and through you thousands of others in the Communist orbit, whether Party members or not who have been shaken by the Kremlin's admissions of a quarter of a century of degenerate crimes and cruelties. You enjoy an advantage over those others: You are articulate. You sensed, I suspect, that you were voicing their distress as well as your own.

Perhaps my own ordeal, though it occurred very long ago, gives me the right to talk to you—and to them. You and they have just suffered the impact of disenchantment in one shattering blow. In my case the process was spread over several years, while I was living and working in the Soviet Union.

I had never joined the Party, but I had accepted its philosophy, believed its claims and defended the communist regime against its detractors. Then I found myself in the Soviet Union and, try as I would

to explain them away, to justify and rationalise, the harsh realities eroded my imported preconceptions. In due time I was to describe it all in a book, *Assignment in Utopia*. I know how achingly empty life seems at first when your long-cherished certainties turn to dust, when your dream turns into a nightmare, when you discover that those whom you denounced as slanderers were telling the ugly truth after all. I know in short, what you are going through.

I am writing you, also, because I do not regard all communists as scoundrels. I know that most of them were drawn into the movement by their heartstrings—by an outraged sense of justice and a naive faith in social patent medicines—and that not all of them have been irretrievably corrupted. The fact that so many former communists have fully recovered their moral sanity tells the story. It has always seemed to me the duty of free men to offer sympathy and understanding to those who show signs of wishing to escape from the communist morass.

Whether you are conscious of it or not, Mr. Fast, that cry from the heart is a cry for help. The column itself carries the proofs of how deeply you are stuck in the morass. For in the very moment of swearing to respect truth and abjure phony rationalisations, you indulge in childish alibis based on transparent falsehoods.

In your grief over the Soviet horrors, you fall back upon the least clever of the standard rationales, that of equating flaws in free societies with barbarous crimes in the Soviet Union. You continue to love America despite its faults, you argue, and therefore can continue to love the Soviet regime despite its faults. But you are too intelligent not to see through this deception. You must know in your heart that our country at its worst is free compared with any totalitarian country at its best.

Take the matter of "civil rights, the sacred right of *habeas corpus*, public appeal to higher courts, judgement by one's peers" for which, as you rightly say, "thousands of brave men had given their lives." The worst you can charge is that capitalist courts sometimes have "mishandled and perverted" such rights. Is that really a fair equivalent of the "barbarism and paranoid blood-lust" in the USSR? Is an occasional miscarriage of justice the same as the total absence of justice? Is our rare mishandling of the *habeas corpus* comparable to the complete denial not only of *habeas corpus* but of *habeas cadaver*?

As against the "madness and wickedness of a handful of Soviet leaders," you counterpose the conduct of "McCarthy and his contemptible cronies." Again, you are too sensible to believe that preposterous equation. In the final analysis McCarthy, even if he were as wicked as you think, is one Senator among 96 and

has to contend with a free press and a largely hostile public opinion. But your Soviet handful consisted of Stalin, his associates and executioners, exercising absolute and arbitrary power over 200 million people.

Can you continue to justify a Stalin in terms of a McCarthy and live with your conscience? Your act of contrition will be futile, will only compound your guilt, as long as you do not allow yourself to distinguish between a pimple and a cancer.

You try pathetically to console yourself by calling the exposure of Stalin by his surviving fellow-criminals one of the "heartening indications" of change. But what, in common sense, is so heartening about accomplices who pillory their dead chieftain without admitting their own guilt, without renouncing the fruits of his blood-lust, without even attempting to explain what it is in the Soviet system that enables the most inhuman of its leaders to take total command of the country and of the world communist movement?

Having read the Khrushchev speech, you know that he did not renounce terror as such, but only terror against selected people. He fully condoned Stalinist frameups when used against "enemies" like Bukharin or Zinoviev. Why do you find that heartening? Surely you understand that as long as arbitrary violence—what your own leader, Eugene Dennis, calls "the use of tortures and rigged trials"—can be employed against "enemies" by the very dictators who alone decide who is or is not an enemy, nothing has changed.

And the Khrushchev inventory of horrors, as you point out yourself, was selective. You cite his failure to deal with the persecution of Jews. But you might have gone on and noted the more startling omissions. There was no reference to, and therefore an implied approval of, the brutalities of forcible collectivization, the system of slave labour on a chilling scale, the fake elections at home and fake plebiscites in captive East European countries.

Much as you love "socialism"—or what you personally think this coverword means—you proclaim that certain fundamental human values are more important. These you sum up as "the holy right of man to his own conscience, his own dignity, his right to say what he pleases when he pleases, to speak clearly and boldly for the truth."

It is an admirable summation, and proof that you are not utterly lost. But how, by the test of such values, can you persist in loving and defending the Kremlin nightmare? Do you truly believe that conscience and dignity and truth are no longer dangerous in Soviet Russia in this the fourth year after Stalin's passing?

A journalist whom you can hardly dismiss as a capitalist lackey or a gangster of the pen, I.F. Stone, has just emerged from a visit to the USSR. What he saw and sensed made him suffer, even as the revelations about the Stalin period make you suffer. In his newsletter of May 28, Stone writes: "The way home from Moscow has been agony for me." His friends urged him, in the name of expediency, to remain silent.

But he tells them: "I feel like a swimmer who must rise to the surface or his lungs will burst."

So Stone does rise and blurt out the truth he has so belatedly discovered: "This is not a good society. No society is good in which men fear to think — much less speak — freely When a system breeds monsters, as they say their secret-police system had bred monsters for 20 years, then something must be wrong with the system. . . . In any free country, after similar revelations, a whole new set of men would have been swept into power as earnest of real change."

There, Mr. Fast, from a source you cannot wholly disown, is a forthright verdict on the Soviet regime—not as it was in Stalin's time but as it is now. It is a verdict rendered on the basis of those very values you agree must take precedence over the abstraction of "socialism". How can you ignore it?

At one point you write: "It is some comfort to say that I did not know the facts in the Khrushchev report." But you can't leave it at that. You must ask yourself *why* a man of your intelligence remained ignorant of facts known to the overwhelming majority of civilised men, facts accessible to you in any library. Few phenomena in history have been as extensively reported as the Soviet regime. There are numberless books, memoirs, studies — by foreign observers, by scholars, by runaway Soviet officials, by former inmates of slave camps.

How many of them have you read with an open mind? There is little if anything in the Khrushchev indictment of the regime that has not long been common knowledge among free men. Isn't it true that you did not know because you did not dare to look facts in the face, because you had accepted a discipline that cannot survive exposure to truth?

Always there were weaklings—you count them today among your comrades — who swallowed the "clever rationale" of the period. They crawled back into the fetid womb of the Party for surcease from the pain of thinking and the dread of acting. The experience, however, left throbbing wounds in their souls which never quite healed and required continuous treatment with the opiates of self-deception. Every subsequent shock renewed the pain and the bleeding, calling for yet stronger drugs.

Will you join this company of the damned—those who, because they know the truth they deny, envy even as they despise their know-nothing comrades? The rationale for this period is already available in the long thesis by Eugene Dennis (*Daily Worker*, June 18) which, while your present state of mind lasts, you will recognize as a brew of lies, half-truths and stale slogans. You need only close your inner eyes tight, drink it down boldly, and be at peace again, at least outwardly.

You say, in concluding your column: "I know of nothing better than for a man to feel whole and say what he thinks bluntly." That great reward, which you seized in one heroic moment of crisis, can be yours always, if you succeed in throwing off the Communist weights from your heart and mind. Unlike writers of the USSR, you still have that blessed option.

EUGENE LYONS

Review

Stalin versus Marx

by Klaus Mehnert (Translated from the German)
George Allen and Unwin Ltd. London 8/6d.

THIS is a remarkable book that succeeds in a small compass of about 130 pages in giving a vivid insight into the change of mood in the psychology of Soviet leadership under Stalin from the thirties of the century. It is advisedly entitled "Stalin versus Marx" for it depicts the dramatic reversal from Marxist radicalism to Russian national conservatism under the aegis of Stalin as the shadow of Hitler lengthened over Europe.

The author illustrates this critical change in Soviet ideology chiefly in two fields viz: historiography and linguistics.

The Soviet view of history was Marxist in the initial phase which was exemplified pre-eminently by the famous Soviet historian Professor Mikhail Pokrovsky whose *Magnum Opus* on the history of Russia was appreciated by Lenin himself. But after 20 years of acceptance, the old professor who died in 1930 was condemned in 1932 and his doctrines repudiated and small jealous men who were opposed to him were set up to cry him down and to write an exactly opposite version of the role of Russia and of the Soviets in world history.

It was the accession of Hitler to power that started this defence reaction in Stalin. Marx was an absolutist. He held a universalist version of history with its laws of the dialectical development of classes in accordance with material conditions of production. Professor Pokrovsky had made these Marxist dogmas the basis of his interpretation of the history of Russia stressing the conflict of classes and the role of the Tsars and the aristocracy as exploiters and oppressors. The imperialist expansion into the Asian East under the Tsars was duly portrayed in Marxist terms. The "iron laws of history" were exemplified in every phase and character of the Russian past and the relations of Russia with the West. Personality was played down, moral and religious factors were put in their place as passive reflections in the "superstructure" powerless to affect the course of events.

Now all this was changed. Soviet Russia was painted as the quintessence of mankind, as the people with a mission. The past of Russia was extended back to remote Chaldean times. Subsequent history was portrayed in the succession of stages of development wherein Russia was shown as the pace-maker and "midwife of progress" to lesser people.

The second issue through which this change of front in ideology is illustrated in the book is that of language. Stalin's famous five letters regarding language (held up by the Soviet propagandists as epochmaking contributions to linguistics) acquire a simple meaning in the context of national regression described in the book.

Language is now held up as the product of the life of the people reflecting not class culture but the

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—a plea which was stressed by the International Press Institute at its recent conference in Tokyo—is, for example, unexceptionable. As a general postulate, the principle affirmed is basic to all pressmen. And as many speakers at the Helsinki Conference pointed out, there is no denying that the politics of the cold war often makes a mockery of the principle both as a categorical imperative and as an abstract virtue. But, as Mr. Pothan Joseph pointed out in his concluding address, the moot question is, whether there is any universally accepted standard for judging objectivity and truth; also, if truth and journalism are to be commended as abstract virtues. The questions clearly transcend purely dialectical considerations. More important still, emphasis on truth and objectivity is surely meaningless and a little too naive when no attempt is made to ensure that the representatives of the communist countries are as keen to honour them at home as they apparently are to have them honoured in the democratic countries. In Communist countries the press is an organ of the State. Freedom of information and free and unhampered dissemination of news across political frontiers are for them mere slogans.

The simple-mindedness which the non-Communist delegates seem to have shown on this issue easily led up to the other futile affirmations. Of these the most interesting is the recommendation about the abolition of censorship on press despatches and opening up of sources of information to foreign press correspondents. The conference even recommended free international movement of journalists and unrestricted issue of passports and visas to journalists willing to travel abroad, and the bringing together of radio and television programmes, as well as of technical material relating to the press. All these suggestions are admirable. But the question is, do they need to be practised by the democratic countries alone, where much of these obtain anyway, even if somewhat inadequately? And it is precisely this question which no one seems even to have cared to raise at Helsinki. It will be recalled that even during Mr. Khrushchev's and Mr. Bulganin's visit to Britain, the Soviet leaders categorically rejected the suggestion for free communication of news reports, radio messages etc. from Britain and other countries to the Soviet Union. What the Soviet leaders specifically rejected during their visit to Britain, their country as well as the other Iron Curtain countries are unlikely to accept at the behest of the Helsinki Conference.

soul of the people as a whole. It is eternal. Every language moreover carries a national mission. Thus "Great Russian" acquires a predominant place in Soviet administration.

In a word, the dialectic and universal rationalism of Marx gives place to national psychology and relativism. This revolution in ideology is shown to amount to a kind of new Fascism—a strange meeting of extremes.

M. A. V.

With Many Voices

"The deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world."

—Tennyson.

Hon. Members know that none could raise their head against decisions taken in a communist country. If the head is raised, it disappears.

—Pandit Nehru, *Times of India*, August 11.

The official Soviet announcement proclaiming the abolition of all internment camps in Russia comes as a piece of amusing confession of the hitherto hotly denied fact that things so horrible as internment camps did ever exist in the spiritual home of Marxist democracy.

—*Times of India*, May 16.

The Suez Canal should belong at least as much to the rest of the world as it does to Egypt.

—*Capital*, August 2.

Even those who advocate equality are moved by envy; they want others to have less so that they could themselves have a little more.

—Acharya Vinoba Bhave quoted in *Bhoodan*, May 23.

The difference between a Russian doctor and a Moscow taxi driver is that the taxi driver has a salary half as high again as the doctor.

—Dr. John Kershaw, Colchester's Medical Officer of Health, quoted in *Evening News of India*, May 15.

If the Soviet Union admits enough tourists, a recent visitor to the U.S.S.R. expects an early collapse of the illusion so long entertained in this country about the artistic superiority of the Russian theatre.

—David Ross quoted in *New York Times*, June, 29.

I know you communists are cut up because this decision stands for unity, and you stand for division —always division.

—Pandit C.B. Pant in Parliament on August 7.

It (the Indian press) has disfranchised out-of-office leadership.

—Saka in *Swarajya*, August 18.

We have not only turned materialistic, but we are more so than other nations.

—Mr. Morarji Desai, *Times of India*, Aug. 15

In the economic field we have followed your (Soviet) example.

—Mr. K.P.S. Menon, Indian Ambassador in Moscow, *Times of India*, August, 16.

Private or state controlled monopolies are the defensive reactions of dinosaurs which, you will remember, were very large reptiles with very small brains, against the natural competition that eliminates the unfit.

—Odysseus in *Eastern Economist*, August 10, 1956.

The party system was very rigid in India, not because the party leaders were anxious to get power, but mainly because the legislatures had entered into questions relating to the social life of the people.

—Mr. D. K. Kunte, Speaker of the Bombay Legislative Assembly, quoted in *Times of India*, August 12.

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