

## Troubled Dialogue

IT WILL not detract from the value of other contributions on the subject if one concedes that Mr. Dwight Macdonald's article in the December issue is the most readable account of the Milan Conference on The Future of Freedom that has yet appeared. It is natural that this should be so in view of the rôle that Mr. Macdonald has chosen for himself of a drama critic reporting on a play. It also follows from this, however, that, written from his ringside seat, Mr. Macdonald's article should be more about the acting and not so much about the play. On the other hand, Professor Shils's excellent articles in the November issue of *ENCOUNTER* and the December issue of the Indian review, *Quest*, provide perhaps a better analysis of the processes of thought to which expression was given at the Conference.

Mr. Macdonald's criticism about the inadequacies and shortcomings of the Conference are in general too unfair. The Conference was undoubtedly too big to function effectively as a seminar and therefore partook almost inevitably of the character of a meeting of the United Nations General Assembly, simultaneous translations and earphones doing their bit to contribute to the atmosphere. Perhaps from this stemmed the fact that some leading participants were unable to divest themselves altogether of their rôle as national statesmen speaking for their respective countries, while the whole essence of the Conference surely was that individual lovers of freedom had come together to exchange ideas as individuals in no way responsible for the respective policies of their governments.

On the other hand, if the Conference had broken up into smaller round-tables in the manner suggested by Mr. Macdonald and others, the experience of each delegate would have been limited to hearing and knowing only a third or a fourth of the participants; while this way—unsatisfactory as was the five-minute rule and the rambling nature of the debate—at least one had a glimpse into the minds of all the interesting personalities who attended the Conference.

When all is said and done, the fact remains that the Conference was an intellectual treat. It permitted the renewal of old contacts and the

making of new friendships. At least to those of us who came from the periphery of the free world, the discussions on Freedom and Planning, the economic development of the U.S.S.R. as compared with the Democracies, the rôle of the intellectual, and the genuineness of the Soviet "Thaw," were most stimulating. It is perhaps a pity that the Conference met before the second Geneva Conference. Otherwise, we might have had the kind of concrete situation that contributed to the success of the first Congress in Berlin in 1950.

Both Mr. Macdonald and Professor Shils have made useful contributions in analysing the respective rôles of the participants who came from the West and the East. In view of the vital importance of what have been described, for lack of a better title, as the "under-developed" countries, an understanding of the gulf in the thinking that was revealed is of considerable importance.

In the West, freedom is assured, security has been achieved, and thus the approach, as Mr. Macdonald points out, was a somewhat academic and abstract one. In Asia and Africa, however, either national independence and political democracy have not been won or these freedoms have just been secured and by many barely experienced. Also, the actual or potential freedom is in imminent danger of being lost through the advance of Russo-Chinese colonialism. Hence the greater intensity of feeling expressed by those from Asia and Africa. Hence perhaps also the Western inability to understand why intellectuals in these regions should feel such a need for a cause with which to identify themselves. I am not insensible of the fact that freedom of choice between different causes is the essence of democracy, and that no one panacea can or should be juxtaposed against the Soviet myth. But surely there can be a sense of fellowship even in defence of freedom? I am glad to find that Mr. Nicolas Nabokov, the Secretary-General of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, in a speech made in Delhi on November 9th on his way to the Far East, described the aim of the Congress as being that of fostering "discussion in which free men will clarify and rediscover their true beliefs and in the

course of which the brotherhood of freely thinking men would emerge as a precious by-product."

If the Editors will permit this reader's eye to stray to another page in this issue of *ENCOUNTER*, may I say how disturbing it is to learn from "Notes from a Diary" by Stephen Spender of the sad conclusion, to which Mr. George Kennan has evidently been driven, of the need for a divorce between East and West? Considering that almost every Asian present at the Milan Conference was an anti-Communist, a believer in freedom, and therefore predisposed towards friendship towards the West, Mr. Kennan's views, as reported by Spender, are somewhat frightening in their defeatism. No one who has seen my article on "The Mind of Asia" in the July issue of *Foreign Affairs* will accuse me of being insensible of the exasperation that must be caused to clear-sighted people like Mr. Kennan by certain aspects of neutralist thought in this part of the world, but surely this calls for an effort to build bigger and better bridges by which to link Eastern and Western thinking and not for throwing up one's hands in despair and permitting yet one more Curtain to be erected.

In that context, perhaps it is a pity that neither Mr. Macdonald nor Professor Shils mentioned the Resolutions adopted by the General Assembly of the Congress in Milan on the day after the Conference concluded. All three of these Resolutions were concerned with developments in the under-developed regions—the first protesting against the suppression of a liberal newspaper in a country of Latin America; the second giving expression to solidarity with Hu Feng and other Chinese writers who have fallen victims to Communist suppression; and the third giving concrete embodiment to the recognition of the importance of the underdeveloped regions by all speakers at the Milan Conference. Since this last Resolution is of some little significance as giving shape to what may be called our own Point Four Programme, I would like to be permitted to cite it:

"Taking note of the strength of sentiment at the Conference on the Future of Freedom in regard to the vital importance to the strength and unity of the peoples of the under-developed regions, this General Assembly of the Congress for Cultural Freedom recommends to the Executive Committee the desirability of considering ways and means, through the organisation of the Congress and otherwise, of giving concrete expression to the solidarity of the intellectuals of the free world with the writers and artists of the under-developed regions, such as research in com-

mon problems, assistance in translation and publication of books, exhibitions of paintings and other artistic activities."

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IN HIS account of the Milan Conference in the "Future of Freedom" published in the November issue of *ENCOUNTER* under the title "The End of Ideology?", Edward Shils writes that I there "denied the obligation of the richer countries to provide aid to the poorer countries." Other members of the Conference seem to have taken the view that I had said that such help should not be given at all. This, as I explained in a later session, was obviously untrue; but even Mr. Shils, who comes nearer the point, does not convey accurately what I wished to say, and still think worth saying. I therefore should like to take this opportunity of unambiguously stating my position.

One thing at least must be clear to anyone who troubled to consider the implications of the Milan discussions—though it is by no means necessary to have been at Milan in order to grasp it—and that is, that whatever may be true about the "bipolarity" of the contemporary world from the military or military/political viewpoint, it patently does not exist in the sphere of the mind, or in that of popular emotions. For NorthAtlantica the threat to freedom is almost wholly today the threat from the Soviet world; the fate they fear is the fate of Russia's satellites, or at a more sophisticated level (or if you prefer more ingenuous level) that of being forced by the very struggle against it to compete with the Soviet Union into practices which would assimilate their own conditions too closely to their assailants'. With some exceptions this whole preoccupation is alien to the rest of the non-Soviet world; and even where it was obviously felt very strongly at Milan, as by Mr. M. Masani, its expression could not find any very straightforward form because of the necessity of reconciling it with the general ideology of the "underdeveloped" countries. Outside NorthAtlantica, based as it is upon non-intervention by the West in their affairs, Mr. Shils's question, "The End of Ideology?", could only receive an unqualified negative.

In as far as "freedom" is an evocative word outside NorthAtlantica, it is so not in the individualist or pluralist sense attached to it in NorthAtlantica, but in terms of this new ideology of the "underdeveloped" countries; and that it is a new ideology is most easily demonstrated by the fact that it is shared by people in countries whose situation in regard to

the Soviet world on the one hand, and the West on the other, differs very considerably from case to case. Countries like India or the Arab States, which have only relatively recently emerged from foreign rule or control, talk in the same accents as West Africans whose countries have not yet reached independent status, or as countries which, like the Latin American States, have been independent nations as long as Belgium. The meaning attached to freedom within this ideology clearly refers to freedom of the nation rather than to the status of individuals or groups within it. But the fact that the ideology survives not only the grant of political independence but even, as the example of India shows, the assumption of acknowledged Great Power status, shows that its claims are much wider. What those who share this ideology believe is that the peoples to which they belong have an unqualified claim, not only to political sovereignty as this was defined in Europe in the heyday of the nation-state, but also to other concessions on the part of the Western Powers without which they cannot enjoy their "freedom."

THE heart of the matter is the economic aspect of the ideology, which is based on the view that the West, being richer than the poorer countries outside NorthAtlantica, owes them aid of a kind which will enable them to close the gap between their own standards of living and those of the West, and that the existence of the gap itself is due, at best, to the callous indifference of the West to the welfare of other peoples, and at worst, to a deliberate holding back in the past of economic development in the ex-colonies in the interests of the metropolitan areas. And this demand for economic aid is of course put forward in terms which deny any right to those from whom the aid comes to supervise its use from the point of view of policy or efficiency.

As was pointed out by at least two Asian speakers at Milan, this attitude has important repercussions on the internal affairs of newly enfranchised countries as well as on contemporary international relations. All ideologies have their scapegoats, and the function of a scapegoat is to prevent one from tackling one's own weaknesses. If the poverty of some countries can all be attributed to outside forces, and with it all the failings of their social and political systems, there is no incentive for a rational examination of what their own resources can provide and of what must be done to make the best use of them.

The attitude that the underdeveloped countries have a legitimate claim for aid is one which is supported—and was indeed at Milan—by the argument that the alternative is to see these

countries fall under the Communist yoke. Quite apart from the natural reluctance of the West to see further countries fall under Communist control, it is also argued that the accretion of strength which this would bring to the Communist *bloc* is something which the West cannot afford. If Asia and Africa go, so too will NorthAtlantica. Now in all such arguments a number of quite separate questions are raised and in a dangerously confused form. There is first of all, the assumption that "poverty equals Communism," that is to say that unless the existing régimes can do more to meet the physical needs of the people, they will be forced to give way to Communist régimes who will at least offer to do more for them, and by sheer ruthlessness may actually be able to do more, certainly in the short run. The trouble is that the equation is by no means self-evident, and does not correspond to any historical analysis of how Communism has in fact come to flourish in different societies or how it has actually come into power in some of them. And by assuming the equation, one is probably prevented from thinking this problem through and coming to a conclusion more in accordance with observed fact. This, however, is not the most dangerous form of this argument; for it is clear that a healthy social order—other things being equal—is more resistant to Communist infiltration in the absence of overwhelming external force, and that one of the characteristics of such a healthy social order is a rate of economic growth not too hopelessly out of accord with the expectations of the more active and more vocal parts of the population.

A much more insidious argument is that which assumes that the underdeveloped countries have two alternative paths of economic growth open to them. They can either choose a free economy (not necessarily without a good deal of state intervention of the Western type) and use aid from NorthAtlantica to help achieve it, or they can choose the Soviet type of advance and get Soviet aid in order to do so. In this sense the underdeveloped countries see themselves as being put up for auction between the two great power-*blocs*, or as exercising on NorthAtlantica a form of direct and perhaps rewarding political blackmail, to which the Egyptian arms deal with Czechoslovakia may perhaps be taken as a political parallel.

The point here is of course that the whole notion of the world-situation from which this idea derives is based on an interpretation of the Soviet attitude which will scarcely survive serious examination. Aid from the Soviet *bloc* cannot in the long run be compatible with the idea of national self-determination which is the root idea of the whole ideology we are discussing, because it must ultimately mean incorporation

within the Soviet *bloc* and the determination of the pace and scale of its economic development in accordance with a central plan. Such economic involvement cannot also help but be used in order to assist in the transformation of the whole of society—not just of its economic institutions—on the Soviet model. Why should the Russians repudiate their own ideology to suit the convenience of Asians, or Africans? And what sign is there in anything they have done or said to lead one to suppose that they intend to do so? It is not simply that the Asians or Africans would be asked to do without the parliamentary forms of liberal democracy—they are perfectly entitled to say that if they can have more bread for the hungry by jettisoning them, that is what they will do. What they must accept goes far deeper than this, and means above all, not just the sacrifice of individual freedoms which they may regard as secondary, but of national freedoms also which is what they presumably care about most. It is a fact that China is rapidly disproving the claims once advanced by people like K. M. Pannikar as to the possibility of separate forms of development within the overall Soviet pattern; but the lesson has not been learned—as has been shown so abundantly during the visit of Bulganin and Khrushchev to India and Burma. The habit of using the “Soviet alternative” as a weapon with which to blackmail the West is likely to prevent any real examination by people in the underdeveloped countries as to what that alternative really amounts to.

NOTHING is more necessary for the health of the whole international order than that the newly enfranchised countries should find for themselves foreign policies embodying their own aspirations certainly, but also in accordance with objective fact. They must begin by understanding the Communists, whose pressure upon them is in most cases the more immediate. But they must also do more to understand the West. And they may then find that the argument based on the alleged self-interest of the West is not as convincing as they appear to think. Certainly it is in the interest of NorthAtlantica to prevent the further expansion of the Soviet *bloc* and to employ part of its resources for that purpose. But there are competing demands for these resources, and it is not immediately obvious how they should be divided as between the needs of armament, those of the weaker members of NorthAtlantica itself, and finally, those of the “underdeveloped” countries. As Peter Wiles pointed out at Milan, to accept the demands of the underdeveloped countries alongside our own peoples’ belief in their right to an increasing standard of living, means to require a rate of

productive growth unattainable under the present conditions of western capitalism or socialism. To shift to a system based entirely on criteria of productivity means the removal from our own system of such checks as are inherent in a free trade-unionism and other valued features of it; it means in fact adopting a system in many respects much closer to the Soviet one—in other words a large-scale sacrifice of individual and group freedoms. We may possibly have no alternative; but we shall certainly wish to decide for ourselves whether or not this is true. If the only way to defend freedom where it exists is to begin by abolishing it, is it right to act thus? It has taken centuries for the West to reach its admittedly imperfect approach to the idea of a free society; ought it not rather to adopt a Byzantine attitude towards this inheritance, to concentrate on its preservation and trust to some modern equivalent to a fortified frontier to prevent it from being overwhelmed? Certainly if we are sincere when we say that “containment” is not enough, that we still hope to see freedom begin to spread within the Communist world itself, it is vital that a living alternative to the Communist model should exist somewhere in the world.

Two other points are worth making in this context. In the first place, if the demand for aid from NorthAtlantica is couched in terms of the common threat from the Soviet *bloc*, its effectiveness—granted the moods of democratic electorates—will depend on the degree of intensity with which this threat presents itself from time to time. A relaxation in Soviet pressure may thus lead to a sudden scaling down of aid and render ineffective much long-term planning in the underdeveloped countries themselves. In the second place, such wholly political arguments tend to push into the background the technical questions of the form such aid should take. Under colonial rule or in situations where the lending country could exercise a degree of political control, the investment of private capital took place at rates largely determined by the comparative profitability of such investments. It has been made clear that most at any rate of the recently enfranchised States are in no mood to give assurances of the kind that would satisfy private capitalists. Why should the latter then risk more Abadans? Furthermore, the employment of foreign experts during the transitional period while an indigenous technical class is being built up has depended in the past on special rates of pay, expatriation allowances, and so on. These again now appear in many quarters to carry with them a suggestion of the old superiority claimed by the peoples of NorthAtlantica. On the other hand, why should someone from NorthAtlantica, with many

opportunities of employment nearer home, seek it in a strange climate and alien atmosphere if he has neither the impulse of imperial service, nor the lure of a larger personal income?

The first point could be met by direct financial aid as between governments, or channelled through international institutions; but this depends on the willingness of the tax-payers of NorthAtlantica to accept this as a continuing burden. The second point can hardly be met at all by State action except by still further inroads on personal liberty. It is also only if the case for aid be generally accepted as a moral imperative that Western trade unionists and others whose cooperation is necessary can be got to assist in the measures for “training on the job,” which are essential if a high rate of development is to be maintained.

For these reasons three conclusions seem inescapable. In so far as assistance in raising the standards of living of the underdeveloped countries is to be a permanent charge on NorthAtlantica, this can only be so if the notion of a community of obligations which increasingly governs the internal arrangements of Western societies is accepted in the wider sphere of international relations. In the nature of things, this must take time; new moral standards demanding new sacrifices do not emerge overnight. And some of the actions, and still more some of the language of the leaders of the newly enfranchised States is hardly calculated to assist this process in the West.

Secondly, the burden of creating the institutions of a free society and of spreading its assumptions among their peoples rests squarely upon the shoulders of these same leaders. Freedom cannot be conferred from outside.

Finally, it is the underdeveloped countries that must largely take the initiative in finding the technical means by which the general concept of aid can be translated into practical reality under modern conditions.

Before closing I would like to repeat and amplify one more point which I tried to make at Milan. If it is necessary that NorthAtlantica discard those feelings of racial superiority which have contributed to the odium often attached to it in Asia and Africa, it is equally important that the underdeveloped countries should discard a certain inferiority complex which often manifests itself by lofty claims to cultural or even moral superiority as against the West. Mr. Nehru’s foreign policy may be wiser than that of Western statesmen or less wise; but as has been shown in the Kashmir case, to look no further, it is just as much bounded by considerations of interest as the policy of any other sovereign country. Nor do Western intellectuals

assist in producing a healthy relationship with the newly enfranchised peoples by proclaiming the guilt of their own nations, and acting as though they had something to expiate. The record of Western imperialism can hardly yet be judged, as future historians may be able to judge it. Its retreat, for good or evil, is proceeding at such a speed that it will soon be an accomplished fact. What remains true is that, whatever the cultural achievements of Asia and Africa have been in the past, these continents have no tradition of a social order based upon the ideas of freedom that they now regard as their right. The building of the new nations is being done on Western models—and where these models are repudiated, it is in favour of Soviet Communism, itself the offshoot or perversion of a Western creed. There is no reason why these countries should be ashamed of borrowing, nor we of lending. The conditions exist for a dialogue between equals and one based on mutual respect. It is the only kind of dialogue worth having.

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### “The Soviet Crisis”

MY ATTENTION has been drawn to an article in the August issue of ENCOUNTER in which Mr. Colin Clark, in the course of a sweeping attack on American students of Soviet economic affairs, criticises some statements and calculations of my own. It is easy to answer this criticism and I do so later, but Mr. Clark’s references to myself are less important than his wholesale condemnation of a large group of scholars concerning whose work he is obviously ill-informed. It is, therefore, necessary to begin any reply to him with a look at the larger issues that he raises.

Mr. Clark sets out on the trail of “some interesting myths and half-truths” about the rate of growth of the Soviet economy, and traces the crime—“by a curious paradox,” he admits—to the doorstep of the “type of learned man [who] seems to be relatively more abundant in the United States than in Europe.” The trouble, it appears, is that “there are now in the United States a number of large, well-financed, well-known institutions for the carrying out of research into the economic institutions of the Soviet Union, and they are producing, on the whole, second-rate and uncritical material.” These serious charges are offered for the reader’s acceptance largely on Mr. Clark’s word. Unfortunately for Mr. Clark’s thesis, the modicum