

Which Policy in Asia?

BEFORE Sir Winston and Mr. Eden left London [for Washington] Mr. Eden got the full support of the House of Commons — both Conservative and Labour Parties—for a policy of peaceful co-existence with the Communist half of the world. He spoke of a Locarno-type pact for Asia. Locarno, in 1925, was an agreement among the European Powers to guarantee agreed frontiers and arbitrate about disputed ones. If a pact of this kind were acceptable now it would presumably define spheres of influence and contain an undertaking of non-aggression from all parties. But American thinking has been largely opposed to that notion, so far. American opinion is now close to rejecting the idea that you can get anywhere by negotiating with Communists. The United States view is that a rigid line must be drawn in South-East Asia and a strong military alliance built behind it. The American desire is to line things up in black and white, for and against. But in Asia it isn't easy to do that. There are all manner of problems, conflicting philosophies, material interests and ambitions. Britain, for instance, cannot risk alienating Asian opinion within the Commonwealth.

The impatience of Mr. Dulles and millions of Americans with the delay in getting ahead with an Asian alliance based on military strength has to be seen against the background of America's progress in foreign affairs. It has to be realised that America is only now feeling the limits of her great power. She pushed West over the great tracts of her own territory to the Pacific coast, and spilled out over the Pacific to the Philippines. She brought her might to bear to settle World War I. Her weight determined the result of World War II. And in the years after the war she applied much of her wealth to restoring the Western European nations to health and strength. But today this benefactor to half the world in material things is disliked widely, and her new offers of aid, though accepted, are not all taken in good spirit. In Indo-China she has been wholly frustrated.

There is dismay, as one American has put it, that "People are fed up with the United States urge to save them. They don't want to be saved." For all her power the United States cannot buy or fight the world into the shape she wants it to take. A realisation of this fact has made much American opinion irritable. . . . Although it will be agreed that the French débacle in Indo-China will remain in history as a classic example of bad handling of a colonial people's demand for self-determination, Britain can demonstrate that the rest of Asia need not be turned, as the Indo-Chinese Nationalists were, to Communism. Notwithstanding the present exchange of felicitations between Chou En Lai and Mr. Nehru in Delhi, I don't believe there will be any change of the course of Indian policy. The prospect, then, is not entirely bad. But Anglo-American policy will need to tread carefully through the jungles of diplomacy in Asia. . . . That explains Britain's reluctance to get involved in any pact which might look like an alliance of white man against brown.

—PHILIP HEWLAND,
June 26, 1954.

Extracts from recent commentaries on the international news, broadcast from the main National Stations of the NZBS

IN view of the importance of France in Europe and South-East Asia, it is worth taking a little time to study her present condition. There can be no denying that the French political and economic situation has been far from promising. Certainly French Governments have long been weak and unstable. One of the troubles is that

FRANCE'S PROBLEMS

France has such a large number of political parties—half a dozen large ones and almost as many very small ones. When a President chooses a candidate for the office of Prime Minister, that candidate has to get a vote of half the deputies plus one—314 votes—to be confirmed in office. Of course, this is very hard to achieve when the Assembly is divided into so many parties. But even now there is no clear cut division between Government and Opposition parties. No French deputy feels an obligation to vote for a Government even if his party is represented in it. There is a different majority on almost every question. Thus it is very difficult in France to make plans and carry them out. . . .

There are also grave economic weaknesses in France. The long drawn out inflation has destroyed the status of the franc, the cost of reconstruction after two wars has been heavy, and industrial output is lagging far behind that of other Western nations, especially Germany. . . . The brighter side of the picture is that there are signs of an awakening of French public opinion. American inquiries into the manner in which American aid has been spent in France have produced the healthy reaction that it is high time France made an effort of her own.

One of the men who has been a strong advocate of this stiffening of the French spine yesterday became the new Prime Minister of France. . . . M. Mendès-France is a Left Wing Radical. Still a young man, he was a wartime bomber pilot with the Free French. Last year during the Government crisis he spoke out with great courage, demonstrating "the absolute and urgent necessity for radical measures in almost every major field of French national life." With a decisiveness new in modern French politics, M. Mendès-France has already chosen his Cabinet. . . . He has declared he will secure a cease-fire in Indo-China within a month or else resign. This has also given rise to new hope at Geneva. . . .

On the vexed question of France's adherence to the European Defence Agreement, he hopes to secure a compromise. . . . Many Frenchmen are still suspicious of a plan which means the rearmament of Germany. In addition the European Defence Agreement is intended as a barrier against advancing Communism. But Senator McCarthy has lessened the chances of France joining America in this work. . . . Many Frenchmen have said that if McCarthyism and anti-Communism are the same thing then they want no part in anti-Communism.

—MARGOT ROSS,
June 19, 1954.

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