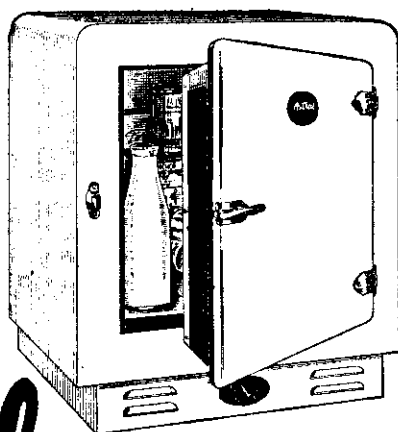


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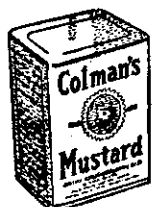
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LOOKOUT

COMBATING COMMUNISM

BECAUSE the West cannot retreat indefinitely, it is now necessary to decide how and where Communist expansion can be stopped. I think it is generally agreed that ideas cannot be stopped with bullets, that military aid is not enough to combat Communism. This approach to the problem will undoubtedly affect the decisions taken at Manila. The countries represented at Manila included the United Kingdom, the United States, France, Australia and New Zealand—all European States—or more accurately, countries with overwhelming white majorities. The Asian countries are the Philippines, Thailand and Pakistan, but Pakistan may not join the organisation. It is unfortunate that the remaining Colombo Powers—India, Ceylon, Burma and Indonesia—will be absent. Their absence will result in the treaty being less effective. They have refused to attend because they wish to avoid a definite East-West line up in Asia. The interest of Thailand is quickly explained. The victory of Viet Minh renders Thailand the obvious choice for Communist pressure. If Thailand were to fall to the Communists, Malaya would be in a precarious position. What then must be done to enable Thailand to resist an attack, or what is more likely, internal subversion?

The presence of a Chinese minority of about three millions must worry the Thai Government. In fact, Chinese minorities occur in many countries in this area, and they are a factor to be reckoned with. In all of the countries where the Chinese have settled, they have become the middlemen—the traders, the factory owners, the money lenders—in general, the businessmen. One would expect them to resist Communism, but their loyalty to China rather than to their adopted country appears to be the rule. That is so in Thailand.

By Asian standards, Thailand is relatively prosperous and there is no shortage of land. Politics have been the monopoly of the Thai armed forces and the upper and middle classes. In this situation, the Thai Government will be looking to its partners in SEATO for two things. It will want an assurance of military aid if it is attacked from outside its borders. It will also want economic help so as to weaken the appeal of Communism. Although a military organisation will almost certainly be created at Manila, economic aid to Thailand and neighbouring countries is far more important. It is also likely to be less expensive. A fraction of the military expenditure in Korea would have substantially lifted living standards in those parts of Asia not controlled by the Communists.

In my view, infiltration in South Asia is much more likely than an armed attack from outside. If this is so, and experience in Indo-China points that way, we must strengthen the position of Asian Governments so that they can meet Communism on more equal terms. Military organisation is only one aspect of this policy. We must take care, however, not to bolster up a government which lacks popular support. We will lose the sympathy and support of other Asian countries, and especially India, if by means of Western aid, a corrupt government is maintained in power against the wishes of the majority. In other words, we should not offer aid to any government merely because it is opposed to Communism; the government must

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

also represent the wishes of the majority of the population. Support for undemocratic regimes has in the past cost us the understanding and co-operation of the larger Asian countries.

Assuming then that the Thai Government passes this test, we should, in conjunction with the other SEATO Powers, give economic aid to enable it to improve living standards. What is the average Asian demanding? A plot of land and more to eat. Other needs will arise later—education and social legislation. Land reform, a major Communist plank, and an urgent problem, if financed in part by the West, will win support from the Communists. The interest of the West in Asia would be demonstrated by such aid. If Asians can be convinced that living standards will be raised without their going over to Communism, the Communists will have lost their trump card. Governments receiving economic aid will also feel more confident to deal with infiltration and subversion.

—J. F. NORTHEY,
September 4, 1954.

WITHOUT taking sides on the question of whether or not France is being exasperatingly non-co-operative in not accepting, at one gulp, the conception of a united Europe, there are some salutary considerations not out of place now, or at any other time. It is near enough to certain that statesmen are making mistakes in their current policies. Let's, then, get into the hazardous business of

LOOKING FORWARD

speculation. A decade or more hence it may be that peaceful co-existence with Communism will have been proved a practicable policy. General Mark Clark notwithstanding. But, and equally, it may be shown that it was unwise to have wiped the slate prematurely for Germany and Japan. These are only speculative thoughts, but the men who are devising policies now will have this in common with the men who formulated what are now known to have been bad and inflammable policies in this century: they, too, will make mistakes.

It is part of the human inheritance that men and women must depend, in a material way, at any rate, on their political leaders. They pay the price if their leaders are wrong. In 1943 there would have been rounds of applause for the late President Roosevelt's declaration that the peace terms for our enemies of that time were to be unconditional surrender, nothing less. Now, with the benefit of hindsight, it can be seen that this policy was open to pretty serious question because it put military victory ahead of political peace. Hanson Baldwin, the American publicist, wrote recently of this: "We fought to win and we forgot that wars must have political aims and that complete destruction and unconditional surrender cannot contribute to a more stable peace."

The Mr. Churchill of those days had a clearer idea of the political patterns of the future in Europe than President Roosevelt had, but it was American strategy that prevailed in Europe. Sir Winston Churchill had ideas that were not acceptable to the Americans, but his perception has been proved clearest.

(continued on next page)

N.Z. LISTENER, SEPTEMBER 17, 1954.