

Along with this feeling of nationalism and anti-colonialism which has contributed to the strength of communism in Asia, increasing attention is being paid now to the social and economic sources of communism. We have talked about this matter more than once in this House. It is of course, an important aspect of the problem. No one would deny that hunger entices men to communism. The false promises of plenty are always an appealing argument to the destitute. We in the west have shown our awareness of this argument by various programmes of economic and technical assistance. This assistance should help to reduce the impulse toward communism by raising the standard of living, and by proving that it is possible to do it without the loss of political freedom and within a democratic system.

But I suggest that we should not forget that these social and economic aspects are only one element of this complex problem. I think there is a danger of oversimplifying the issues in Asia in these terms. Confronted by the appalling defence and political problems involved in the emergence of a free Asia, it is easy to lapse into the comfortable belief that we can save Asia - and that is how it is often put - with economic aid alone; that we can buy off communism and purchase peace for ourselves merely by stepping up our economic assistance.

That, as I see it, is unhappily nothing but a comforting illusion; and in saying that I do not minimize the importance of such economic assistance. What we are seeking to do, of course, in the Western World is help the Asian people to help themselves. That continent, I make bold to say, will not be saved or even, in the long run, helped by aimless assistance or by making political support a condition for such assistance, or by westerners attempting to assume the direction of political and economic forces in these Asian states, however benevolent their intentions. The danger to Asia comes from weaknesses which will not be removed merely by dumping in millions and millions of dollar or sterling aid for projects not carefully enough planned.

The west can help in this way, of course; but the west can help even more by co-operating in a partnership of mutual understanding, respect and support with genuine leaders of the Asian peoples. Democracy - and it does not necessarily need to be our type of Parliamentary democracy - can be established in those areas only by the efforts of the people themselves. Therefore, as I see it, the main problem at this time for Asians is to organize, as some Asian states have done, governments and administrations which are strong enough, free enough and incorruptible enough to make use of western assistance and support in helping to establish the conditions of law and order, freedom and prosperity which alone can counter the appeal of communism.

I do not know of any place where a more significant effort is being made to work out these problems with all their ramifications along all the sectors of this front than in Indochina. I should therefore like to say a few words about the situation