

Very far-reaching developments may be taking place behind the iron curtain. If so, we should keep an open mind and a clear head about them. These developments may make it possible to advance the policy of peaceful co-operation between states to which we of the free world are committed.

On the other hand, words of peace and goodwill which come now from the Communist camp may represent merely an orthodox and normal shift in party tactics, designed to disarm and deceive us.

We had better wait and make sure, before we draw cheerful conclusions and alter present policies; wait with as much calmness as is possible when exposed to all the weapons of mass propaganda which have now reached such an amazing state of technical efficiency. So many and powerful are they, in fact, that it is at times difficult to decide what actually is going on; to separate facts from fancies, the important from the inconsequential. No wonder that public opinion, while ultimately right, is sometimes immediately wrong. That is itself a strong argument against hasty action on many international problems. Yet public opinion, spurred on by propagandists and pundits, often demands just that; quick and clean-cut solutions for international problems which are not susceptible to this treatment.

It may, therefore, from the point of view of good international relations and healthy domestic morale, not be amiss to sound a note of caution as we enter a year which could be filled with conferences and discussions from which we may expect too much. It would be a mistake to pitch our hopes too high for a speedy and satisfactory solution at these conferences of all the cold-war problems which plague us. Many of these problems arise not so much for particular situations, as from the very nature of the relationship between Communism and the free world; a relationship which is likely to be with us as long as we live.

We would also be wise, I think, not to get unduly exercised over the meaning of every Kremlin word or gesture. We might recall the good advice of Harold Nicholson when, in discussing the practice of diplomacy, he said: ". . . it is better to concentrate upon rendering your own attitude as clear as possible, rather than to fiddle with the psychology of others". Nicholson then quoted the words of an experienced diplomat, and they seem particularly apt at this time, "Don't worry so much about what is at the back of their minds; make quite sure that they realize what is at the back of yours".

I hope that, as we enter 1954, we keep at the back, and in the front of our minds, the necessity of following patiently, steadily and persistently the policy that we have now laid down; of building up and maintaining the collective strength and unity of the free world, to be used not to provoke or threaten others, but as the solid foundation for diplomatic negotiation and political settlement. This involves the search for solutions for specific international problems, one by one, so that in so far as we can bring it about the cold war will have begun to disappear by the end of 1954 without having become a hot one.