

Lack of understanding on this point may do much damage to the struggle of the Western democracies against aggressive Communism. The Communists realize this. That is why they strive so hard to pose as the defenders of the Asian masses against colonialism, racial inequality and exploitation. They have had more success than they deserve in identifying themselves in Asia with forces which, in the eyes of many millions in that part of the world, seem to be those of freedom and progress. That identification is not as hypocritical and false to the Asian peoples as we know it to be from experience. To an Indian or a Pakistani, for instance, the conflict in Indo-China is not merely - it may not be even primarily - one of Communist aggression. He may see it as one against colonialism and white supremacy in that area. The Communist government in Peking may not be, to them, a mere puppet of Moscow but the regime which now represents the Chinese people and which should be accepted as such.

The Commonwealth, with its three Asian members, can and is doing something to avoid these misunderstandings and thereby is making an important contribution to international co-operation between the West and the free East. Canada's - and Britain's - place in the Commonwealth, for instance, does make it easier for us to understand - even when we may not agree - with the position which Pakistan and India often take at United Nations meetings when Korean and other Far Eastern questions are discussed. At the same time, because we are Western and Anglo-Saxon nations - who have both friendship for and knowledge of the United States - we can do something to remove the misconceptions which these Asian states at times harbour about American motives and attitudes and policies.

We will, however, never bridge this gap between free Asia and the West if we expect these newer - but older countries to develop politically and economically merely as images of ourselves; or if we expect them to share all our fears of the aggressive nature of Communist imperialism - whether of the Russian or Chinese variety, and to act accordingly.

To insist that the Indians should do so is to make close co-operation with them practically impossible and good relations difficult; and this, of course, is exactly what they want in Moscow or Peking. The fact that through the normal processes of Commonwealth consultation we are able to discuss these different points of view and interpretations sympathetically, even when we do not agree, is, I think, a valuable asset to the Western world.

Consultation within the Commonwealth is close and continuous - but may seem strange to an outsider in the way it goes on in spite of strong differences of view and policy which often occur. At United Nations meetings, for instance, it is the custom for Commonwealth delegations to meet together regularly, in informal "family" gatherings. At these meetings we are able to discuss questions very frankly and amicably even when - in public - India may be attacking South Africa bitterly over race questions; or Pakistan may be charging India with threatening the peace by her policy in Kashmir.