

II

Race and Religion at Bandung

I was now ready to go to Bandung to the conference. Rumours were rife. Everybody was guessing what each Asian and African nation was expecting to gain from its participation. There was no lack of easy speculation and interpretations: it was being said that Pandit Nehru was hoping to emerge from the conference as some kind of acknowledged leader or spokesman for Asia. Japan was expected to walk a tightrope, bowing and smiling to all sides among people over whom she once so brutally ruled, trying to place herself at the disposal of other Asian and African nations, offering her aid as a technical expert, hoping thereby to stimulate trade and retrieve her position as the real leader of Asia. (One Australian journalist commented bitterly: 'Bandung means that Japan really won the war in the Pacific . . .') Thailand was outdoing every other nation in an attempt to whoop up an immediate war against Red China, *now* . . . Pakistan, tied to the West by treaties, would rather not have been at this conference at all, but came no doubt because she did not want to be accused of breaking Asian solidarity . . . Sir John, representing a coalition government in which Communists and Trotskyites made up a vital element, was coming for much the same reasons, being as much concerned

about his restless population at home as he was about Red China's teeming millions. Burma's U Nu, the popular Buddhist, it was openly said, would seek aid and support for his neutralist attitude. The entire Arab world, headed by Egypt's Nasser, would be seeking to air its direct grievance against Israel and its indirect case against France. The Philippines, a Westernized Asian nation anchored by the accident of geography amidst powerful Asian neighbours, linked to the West by treaties and to Asia by fear of what the future would bring, would be in the awkward position of having to carry water on both shoulders, would have to talk Right to keep faith with Washington and to act Left to prove that she was still free in her heart and understood the language of her disinherited Asian brothers . . . About the Gold Coast, Liberia, and Ethiopia nobody had any real notions; indeed, it was rapidly becoming evident that Negro Africa was the weakest part of the conference. The Belgian Congo was not publicly mentioned, though that geographical prison was on the minds of many people who had never met a native from that sealed-off part of the earth . . . I doubt if many of the delegates even knew that Spanish Africa existed . . . The Portuguese and their slave system were remote from all minds. And the millions of blacks under French rule in Africa? Nobody but the North African delegates thought of the role that France played in trying to assimilate tribal Africans, pretending to be God to black men already conquered by the fear-systems of religion prevailing long before the logical and selfish French ever showed up . . .

The main pre-conference speculation centred about Red China: How close really was Peking to Moscow? Would Chou En-lai grab the opportunity to use the conference

as a whipping-post for United States policy in Asia and the Pacific? Would jealous conflicts develop between Nehru and Chou En-lai? Were Asian and religious loyalties thicker than ideologies?

It was my impression that, with the exception of Nehru, Chou En-lai, and U Nu, no other delegations or heads of delegations came to Bandung but with the narrowest of parochial hopes and schemes. But when they got to Bandung, with their speeches in their pockets, something happened that no Asian or African, no Easterner or Westerner, could have dreamed of . . .

The drive up the mountain slopes to Bandung lasted more than four hours and at no time were we out of sight of those brown, Javanese faces. The island of Java has more than fifty million people, a population density not to be matched anywhere else on earth: more than one thousand people to the square mile. In many respects the Javanese countryside reminded me of Africa; there were those same stolid peasants squatting by the side of the roads and staring off into space; there were those same bare-breasted young women with sombre-coloured cloths—sarongs—rolled and tucked about their waists; there were those barefooted men carrying burdens on poles slung over their shoulders (instead of on their heads as in Africa), making mincing little steps, almost like dancing a jig, so that the jogging of the elastic poles up and down would coincide with their footsteps; there was that same murderous sun that heated metal so hot that it would burn the skin; there was that same bright greenness of vegetation: beautifully terraced rice paddies filled with muddy water and rising in serried tiers towards blue and distant mountains; there were many white

mosques and now and then the delicate Gothic spire of a Catholic Church looking fantastically out of place in this near-jungle scenery; and there was that bustling economic activity filling the visible landscape, that frantic buying and selling of matches and soap and tinned sardines, that fateful hallmark of those who have enjoyed the dubious blessing of having had their old, traditional and customary culture blasted and replaced by commercial and financial relations . . . There was that same red earth, that same attitude of the sleepwalker in the young men who strode along, that same gliding, slow-motion gesturing in the women and children, that fine gracefulness of stance that seems to be the physical trait of people who live in the tropics; only here in Java there was no jungle, no dense wall of dark green vegetation rising fifty or sixty feet into the moist and hot air . . .

My friend Lubis was behind the wheel of the car, and the temperature dropped as we climbed into the mountains where volcanic craters could be seen crowned by haloes of white, fluffy clouds.

‘I must take you to see a volcanic crater,’ Lubis said.

‘I don’t think so,’ I said.

‘Why?’ he asked, surprised.

‘I’m looking for human craters,’ I said.

He laughed.

‘Just how many people would you say are intellectuals in Indonesia?’ I asked him.

‘Well, somewhere between five and ten thousand,’ he answered.

‘And, of that number, just how many, in your opinion, can really think?’

‘Oh, I’d say about two thousand.’

'The Dutch kept the people stupid, didn't they?'

'They did.'

'Oh, those dear damned, dull, dumb Dutchmen!' I sang out.

We laughed.

'Indonesia,' said Lubis, 'is an out-of-the-way place. The Dutch felt that they could do as they liked here and get away with it, and they did just that. They did it for three hundred and fifty years. Then the war came and spoiled their plans. There are Dutchmen who still dream of coming back, but that is impossible. They hate the role that America played in helping us to get our freedom. But, don't forget, there are some good Dutchmen, some who fought with us, some who became Indonesian citizens. I must be fair . . .'

'This society has to be organized,' I said.

'Absolutely,' Lubis agreed.

'But who's going to do it? And how? And under whose ideology?'

'That's what the fight in Indonesia is all about,' Lubis said. 'We must work hard. Now, the Communists can do this job for us; they could put bayonets at our backs and make us work. But we must work no matter who is in control. Since we *must* work, why not work voluntarily? Why must we have a dictatorship?'

'Indonesia has taken power away from the Dutch, but she does not know how to use it,' I commented. 'This need not be a Right or a Left issue. Where is the engineer who can built a project out of eighty million human lives, a project that can nourish them, sustain them, and yet have their voluntary loyalty?'

We rolled into Bandung, a city of half a million people,

and saw a forest of banners proclaiming Asian and African solidarity; bright posters welcomed delegations to the city. Stout, squat, white-helmeted troops lined the clean streets, holding Sten guns in their hands and from their white belts grenades dangled . . . The faces of those troops were like blank masks, and they looked at you with black, cold, unresponsive eyes.

‘Horrible, isn’t it?’ Lubis asked me.

‘Not so horrible,’ I said. ‘You see, I’ve just come from Spain where you live under the muzzles of machine guns every hour of the day. You get used to it. The machine gun at the street corner is the trade-mark of the twentieth century. Open force is better than swarms of plain-clothes men. You know where you are with a machine gun.’

Our car was stopped and we had to show our credentials, then we were waved on. I saw that the entrance to every hotel was under heavy guard. The city was organized up to the very hilt in the interests of security.

‘They are taking no chances,’ I said.

‘Since that plane carrying the Chinese delegation was downed,’ Lubis said, ‘they are frantic.’ He laughed softly. ‘Did you know this: a few days ago they rounded up every loose woman in the city and hustled them out? It was crazy . . . The city is now ringed by crack troops. They don’t want any unexpected visits from bandits. Incidentally, no deliveries of packages will be accepted at any hotel in which delegates or newspapermen are staying—’

‘Why?’

‘Such packages might contain bombs, my friend.’

We drove past the conference building and saw the

flags of the twenty-nine participating nations of Asia and Africa billowing lazily in a weak wind; already the streets were packed with crowds and their black and yellow and brown faces looked eagerly at each passing car, their sleek black hair gleaming in the bright sun, their slanted eyes peering intently, hopefully, to catch sight of some Prime Minister, a U Nu, a Chou En-lai, a Nehru . . . Then the air was pierced by a screaming siren, heralding the approach of some august representative of some coloured Asian or African country. Day in and day out these crowds would stand in this tropic sun, staring, listening, applauding; it was the first time in their downtrodden lives that they'd seen so many men of their colour, race, and nationality arrayed in such aspects of power, their men keeping order, their Asia and their Africa in control of their destinies . . . They were getting a new sense of themselves, getting used to new roles and new identities. Imperialism was dead here; and, as long as they could maintain their unity, organize and conduct international conferences, there would be no return of imperialism . . .

Lubis and I got out at my hotel and swarms of children with Oriental faces rushed forward with notebooks, calling out :

'Please sign! Autograph, please . . .!'

I didn't relish standing in that homicidal sun and I said quickly :

'Me, I no write.' I pointed to Lubis. 'He important man. Make him sign. Me, I no write.'

I dashed for the shade of the hotel corridor and the children surrounded Lubis, held him captive for half an hour; he sweated and signed his name, cursing me for having got him into such a jam.

These children did not know who the personalities were; all they knew was that they were coloured and important, and so they asked indiscriminately for signatures . . . And during the coming week every one would sign his name, from Nehru, Chou En-lai, down to the humblest reporter from Paris, London, or Boston . . .

Next morning, April 18, I'd no sooner climbed into the press gallery and looked down upon the vast assembly of delegates, many of them clad in their exotic national costumes, than I could sense an important juncture of history in the making. In the early and difficult days of the Russian Revolution, Lenin had dreamed of a gathering like this, a conglomeration of the world's underdogs, coming to the aid of his hard-pressed Soviets, but that dream had been a vain one indeed. And many Western writers, H. G. Wells, Lothrop Stoddard, etc., had long predicted the inevitable rise of these nations, but in their wildest intuitive flights they had never visualized that they would meet together in common cause. From a strictly Stalinist point of view, such a gathering as this was unthinkable, for it was evident that the Communists had no control here; this was no People's Front, no United Front, no Trojan Horse . . . Every religion under the sun, almost every race on earth, every shade of political opinion, and one and a half thousand million people from 12,606,938 square miles of the earth's surface were represented here . . .

The delegates began to file in. In came the Viet-Nameese clad in Western dress. (I spied an Indo-Chinese friend I'd known years before in Paris and he seemed unchanged despite his background of war and suffering and revolution.) Three Gold Coast delegates entered, adding a blaze

of brightness with their colourful togas. The Burmese entered wearing their soft white caps which had knots dangling at the sides of their heads; their skirts made even veteran newsmen lean forward and crane their necks. The Arabs, with their long white and black robes, seemed outlandish, like men from another world.

Nehru came in in his white Asian cap and the audience stirred. U Nu entered. Sir John of Ceylon entered. Then Ali Sastroamidjojo, Prime Minister of Indonesia, and the ideological father of the conference itself, entered, mounted the platform, and took the chairman's seat. Then came Mohammed Ali, Prime Minister of Pakistan . . . At last Sukarno, President of the Republic of Indonesia, mounted the rostrum to deliver the opening address . . .

He was a small man, tan of face, and with a pair of dark, deep-set eyes; he moved slowly, deliberately. He spoke in English with a slight accent; he knew words and how to use them, and you realized at once that this man had done nothing all his life but utilize words to capture the attention and loyalties of others. From the very outset, he sounded the notes of race and religion, strong, defiant; before he had uttered more than a hundred syllables, he declared :

'This is the first international conference of coloured peoples in the history of mankind!'

He then placed his finger upon the geographical gateway through which the white men of the West had come into Asia :

'Sisters and Brothers, how terrifically dynamic is our time! I recall that, several years ago, I had occasion to make a public analysis of colonialism, and I drew attention to what I called the "life line of imperialism". This

line runs from the Straits of Gibraltar, through the Mediterranean, the Suez Canal, the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean, the South China Sea, and the Sea of Japan. For most of that enormous distance, the territories on both sides of this life line were colonies, the people were unfree, their futures mortgaged to an alien system. Along that life line, that main artery of imperialism, there was pumped the lifeblood of colonialism.'

In the third paragraph of his address, Sukarno evoked in a solemn manner a reality that Western statesmen refer to only in times of war or dire stress; he paid tribute to the many sacrifices which had made the conference possible. Implied in his recognition of sacrifice was an acknowledgment that it had been only through men willingly surrendering their lives in the past that a bridge had been made to this present moment. He said :

'I recognize that we are gathered here today as a result of sacrifices. Sacrifices made by our forefathers and by the people of our own and younger generations . . . Their struggle and sacrifice paved the way for this meeting of the highest representatives of independent and sovereign nations from two of the biggest continents of the globe.'

For Sukarno and national revolutionaries of his stamp, the present meeting was not merely a lucky stroke of politics, but a gathering whose foundations had been laid long before. He put his finger on the date in modern history when the real struggle against colonialism had begun in earnest :

'I recall in this connection the conference of the "League Against Imperialism and Colonialism" which was held in Brussels almost thirty years ago. At that conference many

distinguished delegates who are present here today met each other and found new strength in their fight for independence.'

It is hard for the Western world to realize how tenaciously these outsiders cling to and remember each link, each step in their life's struggles; to most of the delegates to whom Sukarno spoke, this meeting was the logical outcome of past sacrificial efforts. And why had they now come together? Sukarno said :

' . . . we are living in a world of fear. The life of man today is corroded and made bitter by fear. Fear of the future, fear of the hydrogen bomb, fear of ideologies. Perhaps this fear is a greater danger than the danger itself, because it is fear which drives men to act foolishly, to act thoughtlessly, to act dangerously . . . And do not think that the oceans and the seas will protect us. The food we eat, the water that we drink, yes, even the very air that we breathe can be contaminated by poisons originating from thousand of miles away. And it could be that, even if we ourselves escaped lightly, the unborn generations of our children would bear on their distorted bodies the marks of our failure to control the forces which have been released on the world.'

What strength had Sukarno and Asian and African leaders like him? He was frank about it. He said :

'For many generations our peoples have been the voiceless ones in the world. We have been the unregarded, the peoples for whom decisions were made by others whose interests were paramount, the peoples who lived in poverty and humiliation . . . What can we do? The peoples of Asia and Africa wield little physical power. Even our economic strength is dispersed and slight. We can-

not indulge in power politics . . . Our statesmen, by and large, are not backed up with serried ranks of jet bombers.'

He then defined the strength of this gathering of the leaders of the poor and backward nations as :

'We, the peoples of Asia and Africa, 1,400,000,000 strong, far more than half of the population of the world, we can mobilize what I have called the *Moral Violence of Nations* in favour of peace . . .'

And where was this moral violence coming from? Sukarno knew to what he was appealing, for he said :

'Religion is of dominating importance particularly in this part of the world. There are perhaps more religions here than in other regions of the globe . . . Our countries were the birthplace of religions.'

And what bound these diverse peoples together? Sukarno said :

'Almost all of us have ties to common experience, the experience of colonialism.'

Sukarno was appealing to race and religion; they were the only realities in the lives of the men before him that he could appeal to. And, as I sat listening, I began to sense a deep and organic relation here in Bandung between race and religion, *two of the most powerful and irrational forces in human nature*. Sukarno was not evoking these twin demons; he was not trying to create them; he was trying to organize them . . . The reality of race and religion was there, swollen, sensitive, turbulent . . .

It was no accident that most of the delegates were deeply religious men representing governments and vast populations steeped in mystical visions of life. Asian and African populations had been subjugated on the assump-

tion that they were in some way biologically inferior and unfit to govern themselves, and the white Western world that had shackled them had either given them a Christian religion or else had made them agonizingly conscious of their old, traditional religions to which they had had to cling under conditions of imperialist rule. Those of them who had been converted to Christianity had been taught to hope for a freedom and social justice which the white Western world had teasingly withheld. Thus, a racial consciousness, evoked by the attitudes and practices of the West, had slowly blended with a defensive religious feeling; here, in Bandung, the two had combined into one: *a racial and religious system of identification manifesting itself in an emotional nationalism which was now leaping state boundaries and melting and merging, one into the other.*

But let us follow the speakers who spell out this new thing that has come upon the world scene. Ali Sastroamidjojo, Prime Minister of Indonesia and spiritual architect of the multi-nationed gathering, was elected unopposed as President of the Conference. In his address he continued the theme:

‘Among the main causes of the present-day tensions here is colonialism, the old scourge under which Asia and Africa have suffered for ages, which will be a subject of our special interest. It may be true that the larger part of mankind accepts the obvious truth that colonialism has to be considered as a thing of the past, but the fact is there that colonialism is still very much alive. When we look at the map of Asia and Africa we find many spots, and even whole countries, which are still fettered by the chains of colonialism. Moreover, in the flesh of several

of us are still sticking the thorns, small or large, of colonial rule.'

That the Asian-African Conference looked forward to convening again and broadening and deepening its scope was plainly stated :

'I hope that one day, and may it be soon, the opportunity will arise, or be created, to convene the representatives of independence movements in all colonial territories who are still struggling for the liquidation of colonial rule and for their national independence and sovereignty. We, the independent countries of Asia and Africa, have to do our utmost in supporting them in every peaceful effort which may achieve their freedom.'

The degree to which resentment of practices of racialism still lives in the hearts of men who felt it for most of their lives comes through clearly in these words of Prime Minister Sastroamidjojo :

'Next to colonialism we meet racialism as an important source of tension. Racialism in fact is often, if not always, an aspect of colonialism based on feelings of superiority of the dominating group. Discrimination, however, based on differences of colour is contrary to fundamental human rights . . . How often are the timid attempts to have done with colour bars outweighed by measures of ruthless discrimination? Is not Apartheid policy a form of absolute intolerance more befitting the Dark Ages than this modern world?'

Samdach Upayuvareach Norodom Sihanouk, heading the Cambodian delegation, added his concurrence by explaining that the conference put :

' . . . in concrete form, for the very first time, the solidarity of Asian and African peoples . . . it shatters the fron-

tiers which separated two worlds: the Communist and the non-Communist . . . I am proud of having had the privilege of leading my people in their struggle for independence and to have, after the Geneva Conference, determinedly steered our national policy towards . . . the community of neutral nations—among them: India and Burma.’

Then Sir John Kotelawala, Prime Minister of Ceylon, expected by many to defend the Western world, continued the same theme of fear, mental pain stemming from conditions of previous servitude and the dread of another war. Said he:

‘When the great powers of the West talk peace, their chances of agreement are weakened by the fact that each suspects the other’s strength. We by contrast come to the conference table weak and relatively unarmed. We have no thermo-nuclear bombs in our pockets, no weapons of chemical or bacteriological warfare up our sleeves, no plans for armament factories or blueprints for ever more deadly methods of genocide in our brief cases.’

Remembering the cynicism pervading the atmosphere of power politics, Sir John said:

‘The old heresy dies hard—that if you want peace you must prepare for war. As a result, nations have armed themselves to the teeth against neighbours and have increased their might to a point where the least dispute can trigger a conflagration sufficient to involve the whole world . . . The pass to which humanity has been brought by the domination and doctrine of forces is the most vivid demonstration of the bankruptcy of force. Of what advantage is it to hold sway over vast territories, to have at one’s command innumerable armies, to be able at the touch of a button to unleash the deadliest weapons science

can invent, if, with all this, we are unable to rid ourselves of fear and hysteria and despair?’

And who is to stop this drift towards global destruction? Sir John has an answer. He says :

‘We, the nations of the new Asia and Africa, whatever our language, whatever our faiths, whatever our form of government, whatever the colour of our skins—black, brown or yellow—have one thing in common : we are all poor and under-developed. Centuries of servitude and stagnation have left their mark, a dire heritage of poverty and ignorance, upon the masses of our peoples . . . Where the wisdom of the West has failed, is it possible that the nations of Asia and Africa can hope to succeed? I think it is. Have the nations of this region in fact anything to offer? I think they have. Has the time come to offer it? I think it has. I say, then, in all seriousness and in all humility, that the peoples of this region have it in their power to apply to the problems of the present-day world, and for the first time in history, that traditional respect for the spiritual values of life and for the dignity of the human personality which is the distinguishing feature of all their great religions.’

Egypt added her voice, new and revolutionary, to the assembly of nations that hate war and colonialism and racialism. Said Lieutenant-Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser :

‘All over the world there is a growing sense of insecurity. The fear of war has been aggravated by the development of mass-destructive weapons capable of effecting total annihilation. The stakes are high in terms of the very survival of mankind.’

Nasser too stressed the common feeling of identity born

of a common heritage imposed by Western domination. He said :

‘In this conference, we are meeting as representatives of the Asiatic and African countries. There is a striking similarity between the conditions prevailing in our countries, a similarity that operates as a unifying force; we have emerged from a long period of foreign influence, political as well as economic . . . It is not surprising therefore that we should feel close together . . .’

Nasser then struck at Israel as hard as he could :

‘Under the eyes of the United Nations and with her help and sanction, the people of Palestine were uprooted from their fatherland, to be replaced by a completely imported populace. Never before in history has there been such a brutal and immoral violation of human principles. Is there any guarantee for the small nations that the big powers who took part in this tragedy would not allow themselves to repeat it again, against another innocent and helpless people?’

The Gold Coast, represented by Kojo Botsio, Minister of State, deepened the note of the new identification. Botsio said :

‘It is, indeed, reassuring to us to be associated with the governments and peoples from whom we have drawn inspiration and guidance in our struggle for independence and whose experience of similar situations is recent and fresh enough to make them “feel the stir of fellowship”. The struggles and sacrifices of these nations have in our day re-established and fortified the right of all people of all races to govern themselves, they are a shining example to all those labouring under racial discrimination, political subjection, and economic exploitation . . . Although in

our present transitional stage towards nationhood we are not yet responsible for our external affairs, nevertheless we were, on receipt of your invitation, most anxious not to miss the unique opportunity of being represented at this epoch-making conference. Many of the questions which will be discussed here are matters in which we have a natural and legitimate interest . . .’

Prince Wan, representing Thailand, came before the assembly in a rather nervous attitude. Threatened with subversion at home and faced with hostile attitudes from its neighbours over the question of refugees and some three million Chinese owning dual nationality, Thailand put forward through Prince Wan a declaration of adherence qualified by reservations. Said Prince Wan :

‘Truly in self-defence . . . and not for any aggressive or even provocative purposes whatsoever, Thailand has had to join with seven other powers in concluding a collective defence treaty . . . known as the Manila Pact.

‘My Asian and African friends and colleagues will, no doubt, ask me how I justify the attitude of my government from the point of view of Righteousness or the Moral Law . . . ?’ Pleading self-defence, Prince Wan quoted Buddha : ‘. . . all warfare in which man tries to slay his brother is lamentable, but he does not teach that those who go to war in a righteous cause, after having exhausted all means to preserve the peace, are blame-worthy. He must be blamed who is the cause of war.’

(Prince Wan admitted ‘doubts in my mind’, and those doubts must have been rather grave for, on May 3, 1955, Pibul Songgram, Premier of Thailand, in a *New York Times* story, said that : ‘I try as forcibly as I can to lead my country to secure peace in the world. They will always

be at your side—in any way—to create the peace of the world.’)

As though acting under the eye of the Almighty, Dr Mohammed Fadhil al-Jamali of Iraq continued and deepened the theme of moral disapproval of the West and its ways. Said he :

‘Unfortunately, colonialism is still well entrenched in many parts of the world. The people of North Africa, including those of Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco, are still under the French yoke, and no amount of local sacrifices and world opinion seems to influence the French to move more rapidly in recognizing the rights of these people to independence and freedom.

‘A typical example of outworn colonial policy is shown in South Africa where colour prejudice and superiority of the white man have led to discrimination against Indians and natives, and to the segregation of the so-called coloured people.

‘It is our sincere hope that this conference will prove in a very modest way to be a great moral force of ideological disarmament and moral rearmament . . . May I conclude with the reading of a verse from the Holy Koran which I hope will be applicable to all of us here and to all those who are not with us but share our earnest desire for peace.

‘*“Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change from within themselves.”*’

The same themes of anxiety sounded from the chairman of the Ethiopian delegation. He declared :

‘This struggle against colonialism, which has characterized the life of each nation represented here, stresses a problem which the agenda before us underlines at several

points . . . Ethiopia's attitude towards theories of racialism is well known. We have opposed attempts to force these inhuman, scientifically discredited theories, to accomplish restrictive social, economic and political ends in defiance of the provisions of the United Nations Charter and the Declaration of Human Rights.'

Sami Solh, Prime Minister of Lebanon, head of its delegation, spoke bitterly regarding Arab refugees. He said :

'Heading these problems is that of martyred Palestine. Would the universal conscience accept any longer that one million refugees, driven out of their country, their homes, and deprived of their property, should live dispersed on the roads of exile? Would it accept that the decisions relative to this region as taken by that most solemn of assemblies should remain unimplemented? Should we sacrifice one million victims on the altar of political opportunism?'

Only when Mr Tatsunosuke Takasaki, principal Japanese delegate, rose to speak did the tone sink to the level of the rational. But even he had to speak in a confessional tone. He said :

' . . . In World War II, Japan, I regret to say, inflicted damages upon her neighbour nations, but ended by bringing untold miseries upon herself. She has re-established democracy, having learned her lesson at immense cost in lives and property. Chastened and free, she is today a nation completely dedicated to peace. As the only people who have experienced the horrors of the atomic bomb, we have no illusion whatever about the enormity of an attempt to solve international disputes by force.

'In the light of the foregoing statement, the Japanese delegation will submit to the conference certain propo-

sals on economic and cultural co-operation, together with a proposal for the maintenance of international peace.'

Long heralded as the chief spokesman for the ideas of the West, Carlos P. Romulo, member of the Philippine cabinet, and chairman of the Philippine delegation to the conference, made the most race-conscious and stinging speech of all. Indeed, the main burden of his address was an indictment of Western racialism. Here was a man who knew and loved America, who had the American outlook and attitude of pragmatism; but he had suffered under colonialism and he had sympathy for those who were not free. He said :

'In one sense this conference suggests that for the peoples of Asia and Africa the United Nations has inadequately met the need for establishing common ground for peoples seeking peaceful change and development. But I think that we must say also that if the United Nations has been weak and limited in its progress towards these goals, it is because the United Nations is still much more a mirror of the world than an effective instrument for changing it. It has been in existence only nine years and through that time always subject to all the pressures and difficulties of national rivalries and power conflicts, large and small.'

This was straight, honest; then Romulo stated the mood of Asia :

'We do not have to be satisfied with the rate of progress being made.'

Describing the nations who had sent delegates to the conference, Romulo said :

'The majority of the independent nations represented here won their independence only within the last decade. Who would have been bold enough, twenty years ago,

to predict that this would be so? Who will be bold enough now to say how soon or how slowly those peoples in Africa strong enough to win it will acquire the right to face their own problems in their own way on their own responsibility? The handwriting of history is spread on the wall, but not everybody reads there.'

The Westernized Asian who spoke that line then struck at England, France, and Belgium :

'We know the age of European empire is at an end; not all Europeans know that yet.'

Romulo stressed that there was not one way, but many, in which people could cast off the colonial yoke. He said :

'Political freedom has been won by many different means. The British surrendered power in Southern Asia because they knew they could no longer maintain it and were wise enough to base their action on reality. The French and Dutch had to be forced to the same conclusion.'

He is certain that the old system has passed :

'... everything we know and understand about history assures us that whatever travails the future holds, the old structure of Western empire will and must pass from the scene. Will it expire quietly and in dignity? Will it go out crashing violently?'

He waded boldly into the racial issue :

'I have said that besides the issues of colonialism and political freedom, all of us here are concerned with the matter of racial equality. This is a touchstone, I think, for most of us assembled here are the people we represent. The systems and the manners of it have varied, but there has not been and there is not a Western colonial régime which has not imposed, to a greater or lesser degree, on

the people it ruled the doctrine of their own racial inferiority. We have known, and some of us still know, the searing experience of being demeaned in our own lands, of being systematically relegated to subject status not only politically and economically, and militarily—but racially as well. Here was a stigma that could be applied to rich and poor alike, to prince and slave, boss-man and working-man, landlord and peasant, scholar and ignoramus. To bolster his rule, to justify his own power to himself, the Western white man assumed that his superiority lay in his very genes, in the colour of his skin. This made the lowest drunken sot superior, in colonial society, to the highest product of culture and scholarship and industry among subject people.'

How has this affected the millions of the world's coloured peoples?

'For many it has made the goal of regaining a status of simple manhood the be-all and end-all of a lifetime of devoted struggle and sacrifice.'

Yet Romulo knows how easy it is to be a racist; and he sounds a warning to Asians and Africans to beware of becoming the kind of men whom they now condemn. He said pointedly :

'It is one of our heaviest responsibilities, we of Asia and Africa, not to fall ourselves into the racist trap. We will do this if we let ourselves be drawn insensibly—or deliberately—into any kind of counter-racism, if we respond to the white man's prejudice against us as non-whites with prejudice against whites simply because they are whites.'

What, psychologically, did the policies of the whites do to the people of Asia and Africa?

'I think that over the generations the deepest source of our own confidence in ourselves had to come from the deeply rooted knowledge that the white man was *wrong*, that in proclaiming the superiority of his race, *qua* race, he stamped himself with his own weakness and confirmed all the rest of us in our dogged conviction that we could and would reassert ourselves as men . . . Surely we are entitled to our resentment and rejection of white racism wherever it exists.'

Then Romulo squared up to facts :

'Yet this white world which has fostered racism has done many another thing. A rich mythology of religious thinking and feeling, a rich heritage of art and literature came from them, and, above all, political thought and an astounding advancement of scientific knowledge also came from them.

'I ask you to remember,' Romulo told his audience, 'that just as Western political thought has given us all so many of our basic ideas of political freedom, justice, and equity, it is Western science which in this generation has exploded the mythology of race . . .'

Following Romulo, other heads of delegations spoke: Liberia, Libya, Turkey, Pakistan, Syria, etc. But they added nothing new. It was clear that these speeches had not been arranged, or ordered; it was extremely doubtful if Romulo knew what the others had planned to say . . . Hence, a certain amount of repetitiousness drove home the racial theme with crushing force. It was rumoured that Nehru had objected to this battery of speeches and I can well believe it, but I doubt if even Nehru knew in advance what the overall impression of that outpouring of emotion would be.

It is time now that we turn our attention to this Asian master, Nehru, and the man he was responsible for bringing to this massive international conference, Chou En-lai . . .