



Satellites Give Up Hope

BY ALAN SET

WHAT is the effect of the West's diplomatic hobnobbing with Russia on the one hundred million enslaved Europeans behind the Iron Curtain?

This question is certainly worth answering, for much of the Soviet Union's rapidly growing economic and military power derives from ruthless exploitation of her European colonies — Poland, Eastern Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Rumania and Albania. The question is the more important because one of the main reasons why a Third World War has so far been avoided is that Moscow felt that her hands were tied. Any major adventure was much too

risky as long as there existed the danger of a spontaneous revolution of peoples located in Europe's strategically most important area — peoples who were longing to re-establish their Western way of life.

What we learn from the incoming reports is alarming, to say the least. We learn that in the satellite countries today there is incomparably less resistance to the Communist regimes than there was at the height of the cold war. The Geneva Conference appears to have brought a decisive blow to their hopes of liberation. Seeing that they have no choice, the Poles, Czechs and other satellite populations begin to turn to "loyal collaboration" with the

USSR as the only realistic and practical course of action. If this is the only thing the Russians gain through their palavering with the West, it will prove that Khrushchev & Co. were on the right track when they decided to fool us by suddenly turning into nice, good boys.

THE anti-Sovietism of the satellites originated in their distaste for a foreign economic and social system which, they saw, was bringing untold miseries and hardships to everybody but a small group of profiteers. However, a human being usually learns to accept the worst — once he comes to understand that nothing can be done to change it for the better. For more than ten years the enslaved populations remained stubbornly anti-Communistic because they had an excellent reason to believe that there would be a change. This reason was the anti-Sovietism of America, a country almost mystically worshiped by every Pole or Czech or Rumanian. In spite of anything the Communists could say, America remained to them the supreme expression of power, social justice and the good way of life.

One should keep in mind that the pro-American feelings of Eastern and Central Europeans had very deep roots. This dates from the beginning of the century, or from the times when mass emigration to the New World opened new vistas for those peasants and artisans who in

their old countries were often condemned to indigence if not to distress.

At the beginning of the First World War there was hardly a family in this part of Europe which did not take pride in having a successful relative or friend in America. The legend of the American paradise grew from the millions of letters which crossed the Atlantic. American dollars were helping the Poles or Czechs to pay debts, buy more land, build a new house. It was America who in 1918 was credited with the restoration of independent Poland and Czechoslovakia. And it was America again who in World War II crushed their oppressor, Hitler.

The Central and Eastern European peoples' faith in America was, by the end of the war, much too strongly entrenched to be shaken, even though Russia was allowed to take over the seven countries. Yalta, and Roosevelt's fallacious trust in Stalin's good will, was judged as a frightful mistake, but not as a mistake which would never be corrected.

"Is not America strong enough," people were asking, "to restore the liberty of 100 million of America's most faithful allies?" The cold war and America's growing anti-Sovietism in the postwar years seemed to prove that the reasoning was correct. It was even more strikingly corroborated by the mad hate-America campaign conducted by

Moscow. "Our task is to survive and — when the day comes — to help the Americans to do the job." This remained for long years the main motto of political thinking behind the Iron Curtain.

THEN, about two months ago, came the disaster. Suddenly America ceased to be humanity's Enemy Number One in the Communist press and radio. Instead, Communist propaganda began boasting about Moscow's efforts "to reduce the world's tension," coupled with the promise that this new policy would soon bring tangible results.

The results came indeed in the form of an avalanche of reports about American peace overtures and announcements of the exchange of visitors between America and Russia. Most unexpectedly, Mr. Eisenhower was spoken of as a likeable person — almost as nice as M. Mendès France had been when he took office with the aim of torpedoing the EDC.

The anti-Communists behind the Iron Curtain felt bewildered. As usual they tried to get the answers from the foreign radio stations, but this time they heard the West speaking a language strangely similar to that of the East. With the exception of Radio Free Europe, which drearily continued to boast about America's perennial determination to see the people behind the Iron Curtain somehow regaining their

freedom, there was everywhere else nothing but talk of disarmament, lessening of the world tension, mutual visits and hopes of better times to come.

In Warsaw, Prague and Budapest people began to wonder whether they stood on their heads or their heels. To them it was obvious that nothing, absolutely nothing, had changed in Russia's policy. During the innumerable office and factory meetings and in school, they were taught, today as before, that Communism had to conquer the world in order to eradicate from its surface the last strongholds of rotten capitalism.

Soviet economy, as well as the economy of all the satellites, was bent, today as before, on raising the output of strategic goods with complete disregard of the needs of the population. While buying a new suit or a pair of shoes was as difficult as ever, it was common knowledge that Russia was rapidly building an enormous fleet of stratojets ready to carry Russian H-bombs to the most remote parts of the world. Was the West so blind as to fail to notice what the actual situation was?

The Geneva Big Four Conference became a turning point in political thinking behind the Iron Curtain. For the first time since Potsdam the heads of the world's greatest powers met to discuss some of their major problems. They talked about the unification of Germany, about disarmament, about extension of trade.

But the fate of one hundred million people of the Western world enslaved by the USSR was not even mentioned.

BEHIND the Iron Curtain, Yalta was always considered as a terrible mistake which the West would surely never want to repeat. But then — what did Geneva mean? Was it not, by this very omission of the satellite question, the confirmation of Yalta? Had the West really written off the Poles, the Czechoslovaks, the Hungarians, Bulgarians and Rumanians — perhaps hoping that in exchange it would get from Moscow the unification of Germany? But why should the Russians give anything in exchange for something which they held securely and which was not even contested?

The confusion increased when suddenly the Soviet propaganda turned against the West the West's own most powerful weapon — the truth. Since Geneva there was no more talk about the "capitalistic cannibals," "man-eating Americans," "vile emigrés sold to the Wall Street bankers and their friends, the Nazis." Instead, the Communist press and radio were reporting the parleys almost objectively. People who up to now were kept in the dark could this time learn more about what Eisenhower, Eden or Faure were saying from their official papers than from the Voice of America or the BBC.

At about that time a Polish noble-

man, Dominic Horodyski, who had early turned Red and was now a bigwig in the Communist foreign office, met in a Warsaw café a notoriously anti-Soviet cousin of his.

"Do you still intend to clear off to America?" he asked ironically. "If so I can now help you in getting your exit permit. Though if I were you I would stay where I am. For sooner than you think, you may become less of a nuisance in Warsaw than you would be in New York — where Khrushchev appears to have more friends than here."

In this column we are dealing exclusively with what happens behind the Iron Curtain, within the European countries now under Moscow's rule. Perhaps from the point of view of our wider world interests we could be right in leaving out of the parleys the very difficult problem of European enslaved nations. We could be right if by doing so we had the certainty of obtaining some vitally important concessions. Up to now nothing of this kind is in view.

For the time being we can only repeat that, although it was generally overlooked, the anti-Soviet spirit of these enslaved populations was one of the most valuable assets America has had in its conflict with the USSR and world Communism. The fact that we have helped Moscow in replacing this spirit with a "realistic policy" of collaboration with Russia may soon prove to be a major defeat for the West.

§ *The Cobra*

CALLED KING

OF ALL living creatures, the King Cobra, or hamadryad, is one of the most spectacular. This slender, graceful serpent is the longest of all venomous snakes. One hamadryad is known to have exceeded 18 feet, and lengths from 13 to 15 feet are not uncommon. Generally of an olive color, but with additional markings which may include orange red, golden yellow, shiny black and ivory, the King Cobra is regarded by fanciers as among the most beautiful of all snakes.

Ranging through Southeast Asia from India to the Philippines, this serpent can deliver an oversized dose of exceedingly lethal poison. Not only is it the deadliest of reptiles, but in many ways it is the most dangerous of all creatures.

Despite its length and slender body, the King Cobra is strong and supple. Its movements are well coordinated, and it can turn quickly. On occasion it rears its head from three to five feet in the air, and, with hood extended, remains in this position while it stares unblinkingly with its round, bronze eyes.

Some herpetologists believe the

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hamadryad is singularly intelligent, for a snake. It is pointed out that these reptiles, when caged in a zoo, soon learn there's a transparent stuff — glass — which keeps them from biting visitors; so in a short time they stop trying. Under similar circumstances, however, an Indian cobra in a New York zoo kept striking the glass front of its cage, and eventually injured its lower jaw so badly part of the bone had to be removed. And a female spitting cobra, which has been in Chicago's Brookfield Zoo for more than 20 years, is still upset and excited by passers-by, though 30 million or more persons have strolled by her cage.

King Cobras learn which side of their cage doors open the widest. Also, when feeding time nears, they have been seen peering through the glass windows in their doors, or the cracks, if any, in their doorways, and looking intently, with turning head, along the passageways to find out whether their keep-