

Asia's Last Call to the West

"The Color Curtain," by Richard Wright (World, 221 pp. \$3.75), and "The Asian-African Conference," by George McTurnan Kahin (Cornell University Press, 88 pp. \$2), are reports by a novelist and a political scientist on what happened at Bandung last April. Homer A. Jack, who reviews it here, attended the Conference.

By Homer A. Jack

A CONFERENCE was called for the underdogs of the human race: "the despised, the insulted, the hurt, the dispossessed." It was the kind of meeting that "no anthropologist, no sociologist, no political scientist would ever have dreamed of staging." There was something "extra-political, extra-social, almost extra-human about it; it smacked of tidal waves, of natural forces. . . ." Thus Richard Wright, the American Negro novelist, felt he "had to go" to the Asian-African Conference in Bandung, Indonesia, last April—as did James Michener, Vincent Sheean, Norman Cousins, Raymond Swing, Adam Clayton Powell, and a host of unofficial American observers.

Mr. Wright hadn't been Bandung-

bound long before he told himself: "There's gonna be a hot time in old Bandung." There was. However, there was no color curtain for him to penetrate. Black boy and native son belatedly found himself "a member of the master race"! Asians expressed to him their deepest hopes and hates without reserve. He was surprised to find that "many Asians hated the West with an absoluteness that no American Negro could ever muster." He was surprised to find "how emotionally charged the Asian really was." Wright himself was emotionally charged at Bandung. He feels, thinks, and even writes with his skin—and that is the strength of his book, "The Color Curtain."

Leaders of twenty-nine nations representing almost two-thirds of the peoples of the world gathered at Bandung. The West feared the Conference and the Asian leaders underestimated it. John Foster Dulles set the American tone by calling it the "so-called Afro-Asian Conference" and most American journalists went to Bandung as if covering an Oriental tag-match at Madison Square Garden. But something happened in that mountain city which exceeded even the dreams of the host countries. A

unity was forged above differences in geography, culture, ideology, and government. This may have been due to the expression of two powerful urges among the community of the hurt: race and religion.

At Bandung ex-Comrade Wright stalked Comrade Chou En-lai. He—and others—found the Chinese Communist leader to be strangely cooperative, almost shy and coy. Chou shrewdly perceived that a gap of religion separated his nation from most at the Conference. But time could heal that gap and time was what he had plenty of. Thus Wright concluded that "Brother Chou was most anxious to join this Asian-African church and was willing to pay for his membership." This price was kind of an unwritten nonaggression pact with his neighbors.

Thus the victory of Bandung was not so much that of China as of the five Columbo powers which called the Conference: Burma, Ceylon, India, Indonesia, and Pakistan. If Sastroamidjojo of Indonesia proposed the Conference, it was the fulfilment of the longtime dream of Nehru of India. He was the architect of Bandung. Through patience Nehru forged Asian-African unity. What the twenty-nine nations lacked in technical and military strength was compensated for in sheer numbers—a billion and one-half people, the majority of humanity.

WHAT does Bandung mean to Americans? Richard Wright feels that it was "the last call of Westernized



Nasser, Chou En-Lai, U Nu, Nehru, and the populace pushing and shoving to see these star performers at Bandung.

—Wide World.

Asians to the moral conscience of the West." The Conference communique has accents of Western morality and was even written in a Western language—English. The West is being asked to dismiss its colonial and racist ways—everywhere, but especially in Africa—and to help the Asian-African countries industrialize, modernize, even Westernize, but without political strings. This is admittedly a big task for the West—morally, politically, even economically—and economic aid alone would dwarf America's Marshall Plan at its peak. If the West fails to react to this plea, or reacts too slowly, certainly a second or third Asian-African conference will make quite a different appeal. And Chou En-lai will be there, "waiting, patient, with no record of racial practices behind him."

Professor George McTurnan Kahin, Cornell political scientist and authority on Indonesia, has written an entirely different kind of volume on "The

Asian-African Conference." It is a thirty-eight-page essay plus the texts of several Conference addresses and the final communique. Although purportedly a description of the whole Conference this essay is chiefly a study of the role of Communist China (and thus of Chou En-lai) at Bandung. The author feels that one basic, if unspoken, motivation for holding the Conference was to define China's relation with the rest of Asia and the world. Through the diplomacy of Nehru as much as of Chou En-lai, China "moved closer to most of the rest of Asia."

Both Wright and Kahin contribute important insights to the meaning of the Bandung Conference; so does Chester Bowles in his "New Dimensions of Peace." The full story of Bandung has yet to be written; indeed, it is still unfolding in Cairo, Moscow, New Delhi, Bangkok, Peking—and Washington.

Land of Nothing

"One Man's Africa," by John Seymour (John Day, 255 pp. \$4), offers the reminiscences and observations of a Briton who spent a number of years in Africa, especially South Africa, two decades ago. Here it is reviewed by Stuart Cloete, author of "The African Giant" and other books.

By Stuart Cloete

I DO not know how most reviewers review books. My plan is to read the book quickly, mark everything of interest, and then go back and deal with the marked pages. This is a fine plan but it has not worked with John Seymour's "One Man's Africa." Almost every page is marked. I must be his "one man" because his "Africa" is mine. He brings it all back so that looking out of my window I don't see Gramercy Park. I see the Karoo—an area of five hundred miles by five hundred, covered by little bushes, or should I say shrubs, about twelve inches high. The little bushes look much alike. They are a uniform dusty grayish green and they cover enormous dead flat plains and the abrupt rocky flat-topped hills alike. There are no trees over most of the area. There are no houses, no hedges, no rivers, no grass. There is nothing at all, in fact, except the little bushes. Although it is sheep country you can ride for miles without seeing a sheep. Of course the odd thing is that I should like this country of "nothing." But I do. And John Seymour has brought it back to me.

British-born Mr. Seymour first went to South Africa in 1934, as a trainee on a sheep farm in the Karoo district. His experiences there and on a ranch farther northwest comprise much of his book and set the tone for all of it. He worked in the mines, was a commercial fisherman in what used to be German West Africa and is now mandated territory. He writes about Kenya, about Ethiopia, about the Zambesi, about, in fact, Africa, the *Ons Land*, our land of the Boers, and the people in it—characters he has met, stories he has heard, adventures he has had.

This is no quickie, no slick journalistic job. Mr. Seymour is a man who can handle a pick and shovel in a mine, use wire strainers to stretch a barbed-wire fence, shoot a buck and cook it without the help of a White Hunter and a staff of safari boys. There are serious reflections on migrant womanless labor and its effect on the morals of the Africans

Your Literary I. Q.

Conducted by John T. Winterich

KITTY, KITTY!



The stealthy critter that lent its feet to Mr. Sandburg's Chicago fog has crept or clawed its way into much of our literature. Nan Cooke Carpenter of Missoula, Montana, offers an assortment of belles-littered cats and asks you to identify the works in which they appeared and to name the authors of those works. Name six or fewer and you're an ordinary mewed, seven or eight of these and you're a real Siamese, nine or the entire version and you're a Grade A Persian. Angoras on page 43.

1. Bustopher Jones is *not* skin and bones—
In fact, he's remarkably fat.
2. The teares down hailéd,
But nothing it availéd
To call Philip again,
Whom Gib, our cat, hath slain.
3. "He has gone to fish, for his Aunt Jobiska's
Runcible Cat with crimson whiskers!"
4. Cat, if you go outdoors you must walk in the snow.
You will come back with little white shoes on your feet.
5. My neele, alas! Ich lost it, Hodge, what time ich me vphasted
To saue the milke set vp for the, which Gib our cat hath wasted.
6. A little cat played on a silver flute,
And a big cat sat and listened.
7. I had rather be a kitten and cry mew
Than one of these same metre ballad-mongers.
8. A speckled cat and a tame hare
Sat at my hearthstone.
9. Cat! who hast pass'd thy grand climacteric,
How many rats and mice hast in thy days
Destroy'd?
10. We have cats the way most people have mice.