

By ROBERT OLANCY

The East-West split which began — well, we won't venture to say just how or when it began—but which came to the fore in U. N. debates, seems to be spreading over more and more areas of disagreement. We knew all along about the political and economic rift. Now it's science and culture. The recent Soviet-inspired cultural conference in New York was frankly a sounding-board for party-line dogma in the arts and sciences.

It is extremely doubtful whether any more genuinely international East-West cultural conferences will be held. But the cultural controversies will carry on. *Pravda* will continue to answer the *Times*, and vice versa.

One of the latest uproars is over the subject of genetics. Soviet Professor Lysenko's doctrine that a change in environment can change the character of organisms and that the acquired character can be inherited, has been adopted as the party line. Western scientists have vehemently disagreed. (So have some Soviet scientists, but I don't know what has become of them.)

Why has the Soviet so vigorously adopted Professor Lysenko's theory? It seems obvious that application to human beings must be in the offing somewhere. Change the environment and you can breed a new race of humans at will. The superior environment of the Soviet paradise will breed a race of super-men.

So far as environment affecting human beings, or any other organisms — surely, even Western scientists would not deny that. Tests show that only characters inherent in organisms are inherited—but environment will strengthen certain tendencies or lead to a "mutation" in which a certain inherited character which enables the organism to adjust to the environment, is dominant. At any rate, environment is certainly a crucial factor.

Has the Soviet adopted Professor Lysenko's genetics just to create something that will fit into one huge comprehensive package of communism? If so, it is understandable why freedom of inquiry even in genetics will not be tolerated.

The West can do something about it. Western nations can seek application of free science untrammelled by party line. Free science does reveal that environment plays a decisive role — though not quite as Soviet science says. Wouldn't a free cultural conference be worthwhile to explore this angle?