

## Politics and Propaganda

By ALVIN JOHNSON

THE SPIRIT OF POLITICS is compromise. The spirit of propaganda is intransigence. Every true politician endeavors to draw to his side all adjacent force, and is prepared to make sacrifices in order to accomplish this. Every true propagandist hates most bitterly his nearest political neighbors.

Our American system has been welded together by politics. Our political history is a record of compromises. The American Constitution was a product of compromise among diverging interests, regional, economic and social. It was compromise that planted the seat of national government on what was then the malarial banks of the Potomac. Compromise, not always intelligent, characterized our early fiscal and land policies. We compromised away the Canadian boundary question, though superheated throngs throughout America were shouting Fifty-Four Forty or Fight. We accepted the Missouri Compromise. We made our great compromiser, Lincoln, President, to carry us through the terrible crisis produced by our uncompromisers, North and South. We are still compromising, right and left, between public and private enterprise, between farm and city, between social security and social flexibility.

Some of our compromises have been wrong, some of them abominable. But we have grown into a great and mighty nation, under which life is not only tolerable but sweet to the vast majority.

The greatest masters of propaganda of our time were Lenin and Hitler. Both accepted the principle of uncompromising hostility to the party that stood next. Lenin hated most the Mensheviks; his successor Stalin hated most the Trotzkyites. Hitler, National Socialist, hated most the Social Democrats and the German Nationalists. In *Mein Kampf* Hitler makes clear that you can destroy the parties clearly opposed to you root and branch, but the neighboring party remains to infect your ranks.

The peasants welcomed the Bolshevik revolution. It had exterminated the landlord. It had destroyed the large estate. The peasant stood near to the Communist. Therefore the propaganda spirit of Communism had to destroy the peasants first of all, Kulaks, little capitalists, who would not deliver grain for nothing. Millions of Kulaks had to perish or live as slave laborers.

The terrible heresy of Tito of Yugoslavia was that he let the peasants alone. That is the terrible heresy of the Chinese Communists. The

Yugoslav Communist State is to Stalin a more dangerous enemy than "American imperialism."

Hitler's propaganda principle was effective, for a time. The Russian propaganda principle has been effective for a time not yet expired. It has destroyed its near neighbors. But it is inevitable that among passionate and ambitious men divergent views and conceptions of policy will arise. Such views and conceptions are to the orthodox propaganda, heresies to be drowned out in blood. Remember the Moscow trials.

This is the cancer gnawing at the vitals of the propaganda State. Excision does not help. It merely spreads the evil.

The propaganda State is doomed. The mills of God grind slowly, but remorselessly.

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New York*

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### *The Land Question in Burma*

THE BURMESE GOVERNMENT is pledged to a policy of land nationalization. The reasons for this, as Lawrence K. Rosinger of the staff of the Foreign Policy Association points out, are not far to seek. At least four out of every five Burmans are peasants. Most of them are hungry for land of their own and for relief from the high rentals and interest rates that grind them into poverty.

But there are deep-rooted vested interests in the criminal exploitation of the Burmese peasant. One section consists of British interests, another the Indians (who, as traders and money-lenders, hold about one-fourth of Burma's land) and the Chinese. Mr. Rosinger believes that the Burma Government will ultimately stand or fall on its handling of the agrarian problem.

It is interesting to note that the Burmese are also ground down by high prices. Another major question is the restoration of international trade, for Burma is the world's leading rice exporter. Do the peasants understand, one wonders, that in the revival of foreign trade they can obtain relief from the prices that oppress them?

It is to be hoped that the leaders of the new Republic of Burma take a forthright stand on the agrarian, credit and trade problems. For there are two competing groups of Communists waiting to capitalize on any mistakes they make.

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