

HOW WE CAN WIN IN ASIA

Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas is a traveler and explorer during court recesses. Recently he has devoted careful attention to the Middle East and to Asia. Here, in an article written exclusively for QUICK, he outlines his ideas of the challenge those areas pose to current U. S. policy.

By William O. Douglas

We have thought we could stop the spread of communism by guns and by dollars. We have spent billions upon billions and yet the Red tide of communism seems to spread. Why is this so?

The countries of the Middle East and Asia are feudal countries. A few men own the wealth. The great bulk of the people work for the few at the top and have precious little to eat.

There are hardly any hospitals, few doctors. Not many schools go beyond the fourth grade. There is no plumbing and few of the living comforts we know.

A farmer pays from half to four-fifths of his crop as rent. He normally is in debt to his landlord on loans that pay interest of 40% to 100% a year. After the rent and interest are paid, it is not unusual for the tenant to have only 10% or even 5% of the crop left for himself and his family.

Starvation Amid Plenty

This condition exists, for example, in large areas of the Arab world and of Persia. I was in Persian villages where 10% of the people died of starvation during the winter of 1949-50, even though their landlords' granaries were full.

Russia exploits this situation, promising the peasants an end to their misery. America has tried primarily to do two things: 1) build a military defense against any expansion of Russian influence; 2) pour money into these areas "to stabilize" the situation.

Russia is a serious military threat. We need a strong army, navy and air force to protect America and American interests. But the basic fact is that Asia is being swept by revolutions—revolutions aimed at ridding the countries of the feudal systems that have exploited the masses. These revolutions can be influenced and directed, but they cannot be stopped by dollars or even by guns.

Any Change Is Better

Pleas to these people to arm and defend against communism are largely empty. For any change often looks good to them—even a change to commu-



Justice Douglas



"Honest men" of Asia: Mossadegh, Soekarno, Nehru (l. to r.)

HOW WE CAN WIN IN ASIA

nism. Loans or economic aid to these countries usually help only the few at the top. Financial aid stabilizes the status quo. And it is the status quo which has filled the masses with discontent.

Some outlets of that discontent are violent: 1) There is a rising sense of nationalism. All these countries want to be free of foreign domination. This



Iranians demonstrate support for home control of Iran's oil industry.

is dramatized by the Iranians who insist that the country's oil be exploited for the benefit of Iranians, not for a British oil company.

2) Most of Asia is composed of colored races. They are insisting on abolition of the inequality of status which the white foreign powers foisted on them.

3) From the Mediterranean to the Pacific there is growing rebellion against governments of the landlords, by the landlords and for the landlords.

To Win: Ideas and Ideals

There are, I believe, two things we should do. First—whenever great leaders emerge who represent democratic forces and who are on the people's side, we should support them. Mossadegh of Persia, Nehru of India, Soekarno of Indonesia, are men of that caliber. They are honest; they are not Communists; they are fighting feudalism. They deserve our support.

Second—America's voice in Asia should be for basic reforms (through Point Four and otherwise) that will put an end to feudalism and alleviate the plight of the peasants. We should show Asia how her revolution can follow the pattern of 1776. What will win in Asia are not guns and dollars but ideas of freedom and justice. To win in Asia, America must identify herself with those ideas.

Quick

February 25, 1952

p. 10