

Current Topics

India's National Flag Ideological Purity

CREDIT is due to the designers of India's national flag which, as signified by the unanimous approval given to it by the Constituent Assembly, should appeal to all in its symbolisation of the country's spiritual heritage and its aspirations.

The flag varies from the Congress tricolour only in the replacement of the spinning wheel by Asoka's wheel. The original Congress flag designed by Mr. Gandhi in 1921 consisted of three colour bands, the white, green and red in descending order representing respectively the small minorities, the Muslims and the Hindus, with the spinning wheel superimposed in the centre.

As the communal connotation was disliked by many, the flag was changed in 1931 to saffron, white and green representing respectively courage and sacrifice, peace and truth, and faith and chivalry. The *charkha* (spinning wheel) remained.

The Wheel

According to Pandit Nehru's explanation the *charkha* had to be abandoned because on the reverse side of the flag it appeared in a reverse position, but apart from this technical aspect many will not regret its disappearance as it stood for economic isolation and hostility to industrialisation.

Asoka's wheel first appeared on the abacus of Asoka's pillar at Sarnath, near Benares, which the Emperor made his capital after embracing Buddhism. The wheel then became an integral part of Buddhist architecture. According to Sir John Marshall, the Sarnath abacus is unparalleled in its magnificent sculpture. The wheel symbolises *Dharma* or law and peace. It also stands for progress.

Heritage of an epoch in India's hoary history when the country stood united under one banner except for small tracts and at the height of its culture, the Asoka wheel also symbolises the new India's aspirations—peace, law and progress.

Soviet Morale

OFFICIAL warnings issued to Soviet officers against fraternising with foreigners suggest that human nature cannot permanently be confined within the narrow limits of the Marxist ideology. Evidently there have been instances of deviations from the straight and narrow path prescribed by Lenin.

A shrewd diplomatic observer of a minor European State, having recently returned from a prolonged stay in Moscow, gave it as his view that Kremlin officials do not know and do not wish to know about the outside world: there is a policy of "hearing nothing and knowing nothing", and thus preserving the purity of their ideological escutcheon.

During the war the Soviet Army came into contact with foreign troops and peoples, many of whom enjoyed better standards of living. Russian troops no doubt privately revised their ideas about the outside world. Moscow

then renewed the commissar system in the Army, but discontent among ex-soldiers found more fuel in the spartan rigours of the new Five Year Plan. Similar laxity among collective farms has led to several purges since the end of the war, but a return to political orthodoxy, when once it has been abandoned, is never easy.

U. N. Membership

IF the Membership Committee of the Security Council continues its present course, several nations eager to become members of the United Nations will be permanently banned from that organisation.

Russia used the veto last year to exclude Eire and Transjordan on the rather inadequate grounds that Moscow has no diplomatic relations with those two countries. Other objections which have been used to withhold membership from such applicants as Outer Mongolia and Albania are that the States have not been properly "recognised" or that little is known about them. In the case of Outer Mongolia, especially, it is dubious whether it can be regarded as a State within the meaning of the United Nations Charter.

Russia's new demand, that the applicant's behaviour during the war should be considered, is interesting in view of the fact that the Committee is considering applications from Italy, Rumania, Hungary and Austria.

Oil Pipelines

ONCE again the Iraq Petroleum Company's pipeline has been attacked by saboteurs, this time between Haifa and Afulah.

In view of the difficulty of protecting the immense, vulnerable mileage, it is perhaps surprising that the pipeline is not more often the object of attack, although the international nature of the company, in which there are British, American and French interests, means that the attackers are being more catholic in their expression of disapproval than in diplomatic at this delicate juncture in Palestinian affairs.

British and American interests are shortly to start the construction of an even more important pipeline running from the head of the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean, the route of which will be some 3,000 miles shorter than the corresponding sea route. Some years must elapse before it is completed and the capital cost will be great; but eventually it should have a big bearing on the price of oil owing to the reduction in transport cost.

In Britain in particular the investing public have become "oil minded" and recent buying of the shares of the Anglo-Iranian Company has pushed up the price to a level at which the company has a market capitalisation of over £200 millions.

New Suit

"Say, what's the idea of wearing my raincoat?"

"Well, you don't want your new suit to get wet, do you?"