LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

Louis Fischer Resigns

Dear Sirs: For over a year I have noted a steady deterioration in the quality of the political matter printed in The Nation. Many months ago I talked to the editors about this. In several conversations I gave specific instances of situations misinterpreted, facts omitted or distorted, and opportunities missed. Since then I have read The Nation with great care, and I now find its presentation of current events so misleading that I cannot continue as its contributing editor. I therefore ask you to remove my name from the masthead.

I have been associated with The Nation for twenty-two years, and I take this step reluctantly. In past months I have gone to my typewriter several times to write a letter of resignation. Each time I deferred the act partly out of my personal regard for you and partly because I hoped the magazine would change for the better. But week after week The Nation has failed to assess correctly or reflect adequately the crucial period through which the world is passing.

The Nation now has a "line" and omits whatever does not fit the "line." It seems to have lost its zeal for conscientious reporting. I had learned to expect better things from The Nation. There were years when you rose up to smite any power that wronged the weak, when your words rang out against every injustice and against the suppression of small, weak states by mighty neighbors. You used to enter the lists against all forms of expediency and appeasement. Now it depends on who is appeased. Now you devote a casual half-sentence to key world problems which expediency impels you to ignore.

Emotions and ideology can be partisan; reporting and interpreting should not be. We owe it to our readers to tell them the truth.

It is a long, long time since I have read in The Nation a profound, many-sided, unbiased analysis of the world situation, an analysis uninhibited by consideration for sacred cows or a "line."

The Nation has become very much like a party organ. Its opinions appear to be determined by loyalties to organized groups and to governments rather than to principle. The Nation is playing politics; that distorts its policies.

When I saw, more than a year ago, which way The Nation was going I asked to be invited to editorial conferences. The request was ignored. As contributing editor, I was not once consulted. I never had any responsibility for the policies of the magazine. You know this. But I want your readers to know it. That is why I am resigning as contributing editor and writing this letter.

We have won the war against Nazi Germany. Great tasks face the world. It is a time for bigness. It is a time for courage in criticism and for bravery in leadership. It is a time for penetrating clarity and hard hitting. I miss these qualities in The Nation. What an opportunity you are losing!

LOUIS FISCHER

New York, May 16

[We are sorry to say goodbye to Louis Fischer, sorry he believes The Nation has "deteriorated," sorry he feels we have slighted him. It would be foolish to pretend that we do not differ from him on many important issues; in spite of this we thought there was some common ground left. We are sorry to find there is none.]

Mr. Fischer's letter would be easier to answer if it were not so resolutely vague. Why he felt it better to insults than openly to state the causes of his disapproval, we do not know. Certainly it is not the frank sort of attack one has the right to expect from a person who prides himself, as Louis Fischer does, on being blunt and outspoken.

We assume that he is charging The Nation with bias in favor of Russia and of communism. We suppose he considers that to be our "line." We suppose he is charging us with ignoring, out of "expediency," the bad behavior of the Soviet Union; of falling out of policy to denounce the Soviet power for suppressing "small, weak states." We suppose all this, not out of a vivid imagination or a guilty conscience, but because we have heard Mr. Fischer express these opinions in conversation—frequently and without any literary vagueness.

We can only answer quite flatly that he is wrong. We say what we believe. What we believe is very different from what Mr. Fischer believes. We do him the courtesy of assuming him to be honest.

It is clear that we are more concerned than Mr. Fischer is about the growing hatred and fear of Russia in the United
States. We think those fears threaten the whole hope of a long peace growing out of this war; by generating similar feelings in Russia they multiply the unilateral and arbitrary defensive acts of the Soviet government. We believe this anti-Russian mood is not justified by Stalin's basic demands and interests, so far as we know them. We believe Russian policy is primarily a security policy, not an imperialist one; it can become dangerous to the world, therefore, only if Russia decides that the other major powers are plotting against it and takes steps, unilateral and aggressive steps, to offset the threat of a new anti-Soviet alliance.

We have not hesitated to criticize Russian—or Communist—policy when it has connived at the support of fascist or reactionary forces, as when Stalin recognized, and the Italian Communists accepted, Badoglio and the King in Italy. But here, too, we made a distinction between acquiescence in a policy for which Britain and the United States were primarily responsible and initiation of such a policy. Russia has not initiated reactionary policies. It has been high-handed; it has intended without any concealment to make sure that governments set up in its area of interest were "friendly." It has not used its power to keep fascist or ex-fascist kings and generals and admirals in office.

It would be dishonest to pretend that we think Russia's foreign policy is as great a threat to the basic purpose of destroying fascism and its political and economic roots as is the foreign policy of Britain and the United States. With all its arrogance and its open contempt for diplomatic procedure, Russia is carrying through an anti-fascist policy. This is so evident that it hardly needs documentation. The fact is, Russia's own national interests demand the extermination of the whole fascist set-up, whereas the Western Allies plainly fear that the revolutionary changes which could follow a clear victory of the anti-fascist forces in Europe—and in the Far East as well—would endanger their control, economic as well as political. Indeed this is the heart of the matter. Russia can afford to ally itself with the forces of change; it can afford to wipe out the remnants of fascism and pre-fascist feudalism. Because Russia is not defending a crumbling status quo.

To develop fully The Nation's position would take more than this brief space in the letter columns. We shall take the occasion to do it properly in an early issue. Here we can only offer this summary answer to the charges Louis Fischer did not quite make.

—The Editors of The Nation.