tion of law to other vital aspects of the relationships between nations. American inaction today threatens to wipe out those gains.

No convincing or acceptable explanation has yet been offered for that delay, although certain excuses have been invoked. Some states ratified the convention with reservations as to various provisions. Several months ago the International Court of Justice was asked for an advisory opinion as to the effect of these reservations on the contracting parties. American ratification, it has been reported, is being withheld pending such clarification.

There is ample reason, however, to suspect that such an explanation is merely a façade behind which opponents of the convention in this country and in Britain — whose government has not even submitted the treaty to Parliament for approval — are seeking refuge and time. Indeed, they may well have been responsible for the submission of the convention to the International Court as a delaying tactic. During the 1950 General Assembly there were persistent reports that members of the American delegation were privately declaring that the United States would not ratify the convention; this clandestine opposition aroused several Senators and Congressmen, and a number of organizations, among them the C. I. O., to voice their protests against the American delay.

Stripped of all legal and procedural camouflage, the issue is clear. The opposition to American ratification is rooted in the alliance of our racists and isolationists. The former are concerned lest the federal government's treaty-making powers should in some remote way be used to undermine the white-supremacy statutes in the South. The latter tremble at the thought of any qualification of American sovereignty by a multilateral treaty, whatever its objective. And both fear that Senate approval of the Genocide Convention may pave the way for other instruments of international law, such as the covenant on human rights.

But the situation is far from hopeless, precisely because the issues are so stark. The enactment of the Genocide Convention by the U. N. was the result much more of the pressure of public opinion than of the initiative of governments. Continued pressure can force favorable Senate action on ratification before the damage already caused by our inaction is irreparable. The President should be encouraged by a flood of communications to repeat his demand for ratification in order to strengthen the moral leadership we seek to exercise. Secretary Acheson should be urged to place the full weight of the State Department behind that request. And members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and particularly its chairman, Tom Connally, should be firmly told that, whatever their views on military strategy, this country can afford nothing less than a full-scale offensive on the moral front. We must press that offensive through immediate ratification of the Genocide Convention.

Why The Nation Sued

ON MARCH 31 The Nation announced that it had initiated a libel suit against Clement Greenberg and the New Leader, a political weekly published in New York. The suit resulted from the appearance in the New Leader of a letter by Greenberg making false and extremely vicious charges against The Nation and its foreign editor, J. Alvarez del Vayo. The letter had previously been submitted to The Nation in two versions and had been rejected as untrue and libelous, with the statement that its publication elsewhere would be actionable. We repeated this to the New Leader when it notified us that it was printing the second version of the Greenberg letter. As soon as the issue containing the letter appeared we started suit against the magazine, Mr. Greenberg, and those concerned with the printing and distribution of the letter.

We have since received a number of communications, both friendly and critical, most of them asking our reasons for refusing to print Greenberg's letter and then taking legal action against him and the New Leader. The assumption of several writers, based on that journal's presentation of the Greenberg attack — featured under the heading, "The Nation Censors a Letter of Criticism," and accompanied by an editorial enlarging on the theme of censorship — was that we had deliberately suppressed criticism of our policies relating to Russia and communism. In effect they accused us of dodging a fight on the central and most controversial issue now facing this country and the world.

These correspondents obviously did not realize that until the complaint had been filed we were inhibited from discussing the suit in the columns of The Nation or in correspondence; to have done so, in fact, would have jeopardized the suit itself. Meanwhile, the New Leader, aware of this temporary disadvantage, has devoted several columns of each issue to "letters The Nation will not print," together with editorial comment to the effect that we had added to our original sin of "censorship" by resorting to a libel suit and then "censoring" protests against both. Now that the complaint has been filed, we are for the first time free to make a clear statement of our position. We are glad to publish this statement if only to relieve the minds of those readers whose letters suggest that they were genuinely concerned or puzzled. However, we have no intention of trying the case in the columns of The Nation. Had we thought the issue was one that could be debated in print, we would not have taken it to the courts. Every journal with a sense of editorial responsibility exercises discretion in accepting and rejecting letters for publication. Custom and common sense dictate certain criteria which are used in passing on letters as well as articles, and among these none is
more universally recognized than the condition that such material must not be libelous or defamatory. Yet several of our critics seem to feel that The Nation was under a moral obligation to publish a libelous letter simply because the libel was directed against this journal and a member of its staff. This seems to us absurd.

In instituting this suit we are fighting for a principle that includes, but greatly transcends, our own interest. The Greenberg attack was not directed against the views of either Mr. del Vayo or The Nation as such; had it been we would obviously have printed and answered it. But Mr. Greenberg explicitly disclaimed any such intention. The single point of his letter, as he was frank enough to admit, was to accuse this journal and its foreign editor of acting in behalf of a foreign power—in still plainer words, of being "committed" to the service of the Soviet government.

This accusation is unquestionably the most damaging that could be leveled, in a time like the present, against any institution or person. Under the terms of recent federal and state legislation and court decisions it constitutes a criminal charge, carrying with it the threat of drastic legal penalties and endangering the reputation and earning capacity of those attacked. Such a charge is literally unarguable. Even to publish and deny it would have the effect of condoning and spreading abroad a libel which was at the same time a false denunciation. To give the name of "censorship" to our refusal to print the Greenberg letter is to distort the entire meaning and purpose of that document.

No one who has read the pages of abuse and criticism of this journal which we have published through the years will honestly accuse The Nation or its editors of suppressing criticism or avoiding debate on political issues. But we propose by this action to establish the right of a journal or an individual to discuss in the freest terms any issue of public interest, including the most controversial, without being subjected to the threat implicit in the Greenberg libel.

Liberals were disgusted by the tactics of Senator McCarthy; disgusted by the spectacle of conviction through vilification. But McCarthy's success is registered every day—in the campaign against Secretary Acheson, the slurring references to Owen Lattimore in the Senate inquiry, the timidity and silence of college students and professors, the disappearance from radio and screen of liberal commentators or actors whose names have appeared on unofficial "lists." This is the legacy of McCarthyism, and it continues to pile up.

One can expect, if not condone, reckless denunciation from a demagogue who has made witch-hunting his Congressional stock in trade; McCarthy and his kind are known for what they are. Is the McCarthy technique less deplorable when applied by a man or a journal that calls itself liberal? Certainly Greenberg and the New Leader are not McCarthys; yet the very fact that they act under the banner of liberalism gives their charges a certain acceptability. They can even venture a note of sorrow over the necessity of assailing those they would prefer to love! Greenberg went so far as to cite his seven years as an critic for The Nation—1942 to 1949—as evidence of his right to expose our sins. Apparently it did not occur to him that readers would wonder how he had managed to endure in silence his long relationship with a paper whose policy was then what it is now and whose foreign editor was the same man.

A time is upon us when frightened men turn with venom to crush those whose views they hate. Victims of the witch-hunt multiply, and few are in a position to fight back. The Nation, we need not say, is going to continue to print what it believes without asking permission of Greenberg and the New Leader—or of the Russians either. And when libeled in this manner, it is going to fight back—for itself, for those who cannot risk a fight, and for the freedom its opponents seem bent upon destroying.

Peace: Rumor and Reality

BY FRED A KIRCHWEY

The turn of the wheel in Korea has brought about a flurry of peace rumors in Washington and the United Nations. They appear, suddenly evaporate in the face of official denials, and new ones are born. The State Department says explicitly that no Russian or Chinese overtures have been received; Ambassador Kirk, on his way home from Moscow insists that no hint of a Russian démarche has reached his ears. Still the stories flourish and the best information available supports the belief that Moscow has been sending out half-official feelers none of which has reached the stage of negotiation. Whether the Chinese are a party to these tentative moves or even approve them is not known. Whether the United States, behind a smoke screen of anti-Red pronouncements in Washington, is prepared to initiate talks, is equally uncertain. But one fact shines through the diplomatic fog: if the "limited war" in Korea is to end without burgeoning into an unlimited war, the moment to try to end it is now.

As these lines are written the United Nations forces are driving the Chinese-North Korean armies back for the third time across the Thirty-eighth Parallel. The Communists seem in full retreat and the dispatches report a terrible slaughter of Red troops. Once more the chance of a cease-fire depends on American initiative. Either we decide to hold back our forces, permitting a no man's land to widen between the contending armies, and then move quickly to try to establish a truce; or we choose the MacArthur strategy, maintaining the mo-

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