

TODAY ABROAD

by Joseph Clark

2 Asian Countries Seek Paths to Freedom

FOR INSIGHT and style, understanding and colorful description, it's hard to beat an article about China in the latest issue of Holiday magazine. It was written by Han Suyin, pen name of Elizabeth Comber, author and doctor of medicine.

The article is also important because it pierces the Dulles curtain which seeks to bar coverage of China by American news media. It appears at a time when the stubborn refusal of the Eisenhower Administration to recognize one fourth of the human race is beginning to break down. Now the President says that he "personally" favors trade of a sort with China.

"Peking Today" is the title of the article. Its author wrote the autobiographical novel, "A Many-Splendored Thing." Han Suyin was born in Peking of mixed Flemish and Chinese parents. Her husband, an officer in Chiang Kai-shek's army, was killed fighting the Peoples Liberation Army. At present she lives in Singapore, where she operates a clinic she herself established.

Despite her background, Han Suyin was able to take advantage of the offer by the Chinese government to all Chinese people living abroad, that they are

welcome to visit their homeland. Her article pays tribute to the progress made by the new China. It also describes the democratization program which was summed up in Mao Tse-tung's selection from the Chinese classics:

Let the Hundred flowers of all seasons blossom together:
Let the hundred diverse schools of thought contend.

"This classical couplet," Han Suyin writes, "which dates back more than 2,000 years to the Warring Period of China, is now the formula indicating that intellectual argument, free discussion, individual expression of opinion is not only permitted, but will be encouraged. Above all, China is to be Chinese; Mao Tse-tung proclaims: "To Chinese Problems, Only Chinese Solutions."

IN PASSING it was good to read an item saying that Hu Feng, a Chinese writer jailed as a spy two years ago, was reported released from jail. The arrest of Hu Feng was accompanied by a campaign which strongly resembled the "vigilance" campaign in the Soviet Union shortly before Stalin died. After the 20th congress of the Soviet Communist Party the Hu

Feng campaign in China abruptly ceased. Not long afterward, it was replaced by the "Hundred Flowers" campaign.

Concerning this new campaign—of which she witnessed only the very beginning, when she wrote this article—Han Suyin says:

"It is as if suddenly a vast injection of ozone had been made into the suffocating intellectual atmosphere." She describes endless discussions reflecting an unprecedented audacity.

CONCERNING the material things of life Han Suyin reports, "food is probably cheaper than anywhere else in the world, with pork at 35 cents, Peking money (about 17 U.S. cents), a catty (1 1/3 pounds); vegetables from one to five cents a catty, rice cheaper than the year before."

Han Suyin still thinks that much of the material gain made under the Communists is at the expense of freedom. She says, however, that the touchstone of Asia is freedom from want. "If one is hungry, what is the use of talking of other freedoms?" And she feels that China's progress is making an enormous impact on the rest of Asia.

Han Suyin tells about a Pakistani friend of hers who visited China and declared "This is the

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future of Asia . . . Yes, sir, all of us must learn from the Chinese. They've got all the answers."

Han Suyin disagrees. She writes:

"I had just come from India, which was also forging ahead, not perhaps as quickly as China, but also at great speed. In India blew the great wind of freedom, and each Indian I had met was an individual, and proud of it . . ."

But earlier in her article Han Suyin had described a new course in China whereby freedom from want was being combined with freedom of the human spirit. And this will be a challenge that's unbeatable. When economic progress is combined with the growth of individual and collective liberty, when diverse schools of thought do indeed contend in full freedom at the same time that poverty and disease and illiteracy are eliminated, mankind will have made that leap, which Engels described, "from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom."

Han Suyin suggests that India is taking a totally different path from China. But it was significant that in the last Indian elections all the major parties — Nehru's Congress Party, the Communist Party and the Praja Socialists—were all pledged to the socialist development of India.

Perhaps India will learn more and more from China. And it will probably work the other way too—with China learning from India. Both start out economically underdeveloped. Both have lacked essential freedoms as a result of imperialist domination. Both now hope to provide that magnificent combination of material plenty amid civil and spiritual freedom.