Shut-Eye Stand Not Sufficient

By BILL McGRATH

Highlanders had the chance last Friday at the Institute of International Relations to witness one segment of the struggle of the national conscience that has been troubling America since the arrival of Soviet Deputy Premier Mikoyan in this country last month.

This session of the Institute, sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee, consisted of a panel discussion of "The United Nations and World Peace," with the panel consisting of Nicolai Bourov of the Soviet Union, Heath MacQuarrie of Canada, A. K. Mitra of India, Stewart Meacham, a representative of the American Friends Service Committee, James Bernard Giles of Rice and Methodist minister, W. Kenneth Pope.

The Refugee's Challenge

The high point of the session came several minutes after Mr. Bourov had answered a question with the statement that the Soviet Union had no aims of world domination, when a gentleman was recognized who identified himself as a Hungarian refugee. His voice trembling with emotion throughout his speech, he declared that he had nothing to say to the Soviet representative, but that he did have a question for the panel as a whole. He wished to know what Americans expected to gain from discussions with Russians such as Mr. Mikoyan, who gave candy to babies in New York City after having slaughtered Hungarians in their battle for freedom.

How Could They Listen?

He declared that he did not hate the Russian people, for indeed a Russian soldier had saved his life, but he did hate the Soviet government which had so brutally denied Hungarians their independence, and he wished to know how we could endure listening to Mr. Bourov, a representative of that government.

A Delicate Task

The delicate task of answering these questions was taken up by the impressively quick-witted U. N. delegate from India, A. K. Mitra. Mr. Mitra declared that he certainly believed that every nation, including Hungary, had a sovereign right to determine its own choice, but that this unfortunate was not the issue. Rather the issue was quite simply whether or not world civilization was to be destroyed by a Third World War. He then went on to draw the inevitable conclusion that the only possible way of avoiding such a conflict was through gatherings where both sides would have a chance to express themselves.

Mitra referred to the disgraceful conduct of the government of the Union of South Africa with regard to its treatment of Indians in that country, but in spite of this conduct, he felt that the solution was not war but rather, peaceful negotiations. Mr. Mitra's remarks greeted by what was easily the largest round of applause of the evening.

Fierce Independence

To Americans with their heritage of fierce and proud independence, this issue is particularly difficult to face. We have unbounded admiration and sympathy for the Hungarians who fought so heroically for their freedom and we are filled with instinctive loathing at the thought of negotiating with their oppressors.

But even so, it is time that we realized that the issue has become something less than a destruction of their government. We have no right to arrogate to ourselves the right to decide this issue.

Distasteful Visits

The visit of Mr. Mikoyan and the various exchanges of visits between groups of Soviet and U. S. citizens may be very distasteful to those who remember the Soviet treachery in Hungary but we must realize that this is the only way in which the atmosphere of distrust and suspicion around the world can be destroyed.

Russian Concessions

We should realize that Russia too has some very substantial, if selfish motives for desiring world peace, and we should also remember that not all negotiations with the Soviet Union have been concluded to our disfavor. The northern half of Iran and the eastern third of Austria are now free by virtue of past Russian concessions.

America, instead of resting secure in the conviction of its infallibility should begin to give some thought to learning how to live with even its disagreeable neighbors, for it is time to realize that the Russians are not going to disappear if we merely close our eyes and wish hard enough.