

THE POWER OF INDIA

R. Palme Dutt continues his discussion on the imperative need to free India now. What it would mean for the United Nations. An army of fifteen million. India's fabulous resources.

Exactly what has been happening in India these last four weeks is obscured by censorship within India itself. It is impossible to say whether the so-called "outbreaks" before the town halls and police stations of India's major cities are still going on—masked by censorship—or whether, as the British government in India claims, the situation has calmed and is "under control." At any rate, it is clear from rereading the dispatches since mid-August that at least several hundreds of Indians have been killed in various parts of the country, that the protest against the imprisonment of Indian leaders has taken form in all the major cities of India, including the industrial regions around Calcutta. According to Lieut. Gen. Joseph Stilwell, interviewed at New Delhi last week, "the political situation here is having its effect on transportation," which would imply a much more serious state of affairs than the dispatches lead one to believe.

In any case, India's crisis is not to be measured by the amount of violence that takes place. Obviously, the longer the present deadlock and strong-arm policy goes on, the more unlikely it will be that India can be fully mobilized either for defense against the enemy at the gates, or for a continuous stream of production, so vital for China and the Near East. This factor remains the strongest argument against British policy. It is not as though the British government has secured greater co-operation from the Indian people since August 15; on the contrary, the chances are that it now secures less. And the result can be the loss of India to both Germany and Japan, with all the consequences for all the United Nations as well as the Indian people that would surely follow.

By way of reviewing the realities, we publish this week an abridged chapter from R. Palme Dutt's new book, "Britain in the World Front," which International Publishers will bring out shortly. Mr. Dutt, a leading British Communist, editor of the "Labour Monthly," is the foremost Marxist authority on India in the western world.—THE EDITORS.

BRITAIN holds a special responsibility in the World Alliance to assist in winning the free and full collaboration of the Indian people and the colonial peoples.

Fascism is the enemy of all peoples in the world—equally of those who have already won a greater or less degree of freedom and self-government and of those who are still held subject under colonial rule. The aims of the struggle for freedom of the twelve hundred millions of humanity who live in India, China, Eastern Asia and the Pacific, the Middle East and Africa require the victory of the world anti-fascist alliance and the complete defeat of fascism. But the mobilization of these gigantic reserves of the anti-fascist army will only be effective to the extent that their willing collaboration is won on the basis of their own understanding of their own interests, as voluntary allies, and not as servants called on to give their lives in the interests of their masters. The question of the freedom of the colonial peoples is no longer only a first class political issue. It is a first class strategic issue for the victory of the democratic anti-fascist alliance.

The colonial peoples have every reason to understand that fascism is today their deadliest and most dangerous enemy, and that the interests of their struggle for liberation are bound up with the victory of the world anti-fascist alliance and the destruction of fascism. All the most responsible and enlightened leaders of the national liberation movements have recognized that the interests of the colonial peoples are irreconcilably

opposed to fascism. The Chinese National Republic has fought with arms against the Japanese fascist invaders for years before the formation of the world anti-fascist alliance. The Indian National Congress has played an outstanding and honorable role in the vanguard of the struggle against fascism, in support of China, Abyssinia, and Spain, for years before the ruling authorities in this country began to move from their policies of conciliation to fascism.

Heavy as is the lot of the colonial peoples under the existing imperialist rule, it would be immeasurably worse under fascism, which is the most aggressive and brutal form of imperialism. Every imperialist system means the oppression and degradation, the arresting of development of the subject peoples under its rule. The aim of every colonial people can only be for complete liberation from imperialism. But in the existing types of colonial regime the mass struggle has already won in the majority of cases a varying measure of rights of organization and political expression (trade unions, political organization, press, despite heavy restrictions and intimidation) which, though limited and precarious, are of the utmost importance for further advance, and which would be completely swept away under fascism. On the other hand, the development and victory of the world anti-fascist alliance represent the most favorable conditions for the complete liberation of the colonial peoples.

BUT the effective participation of the colonial peoples in the world anti-fascist front cannot depend on their own efforts alone. The reactionary obstacles which still hinder that full participation must be removed. And here a special responsibility lies on the peoples in the imperialist countries participating in the anti-fascist coalition, and above all on the people of Britain, at the center of the British empire, with its 450,000,000 of subject colonial peoples.

The Indian people and all the colonial peoples represent a gigantic reservoir of democratic and anti-fascist strength. Their manpower is vast. Their resources are abundant in all the raw materials for war. Their will to freedom, their capacity for struggle and sacrifice, demonstrated in their national struggles,



Assembly line in an Indian war plant. Because of Tory colonial policy, only a minute fraction of India's industrial resources is employed.

could play a powerful role in the common front and the common victory, and in Asia the decisive role.

Yet barely the fringe of this manpower and of these resources has so far been mobilized. Their democratic willingness has been repulsed and discouraged. In India the army so far raised amounts to 1,000,000 men out of a population of nearly 400,000,000; recruitment is limited; masses are turned away from the recruiting offices.

"There is no lack of men; since the outbreak of war recruiting offices all over the country have been congested with volunteers from every class, community and occupation to such an extent that it soon became impossible to deal with their numbers." ("India At War" [British] Government Report, 1941.)

In proportion to population the manpower would provide twice the armed forces of the Soviet Union. On the Canadian scale of recruitment, it would provide fifteen to twenty millions. The actual outcome is one quarter of one percent of the population, or a total less than that of a secondary European state. Even this figure has been stated to be "largely a paper figure. Arms are lacking for the training of a mass army, and as a result recruiting, until recently, was rather discouraged." (Military Correspondent of the *London Observer*, March 8, 1942.) The Chinese example has shown the possibility, under national leadership, of organizing and training armies even with limited resources, capable of meeting the Japanese armies; but the Chinese Command's offer to send military instructors to India to assist in solving the problem of training has not so far been accepted.

SIMILARLY in respect to resources and war production. India has abundant resources of all the key raw materials for war production, with the exception of nickel, molybdenum, and vanadium. But only the tiniest fraction is utilized. With coal reserves of 36,000,000,000 tons, the annual production before the war reached 25,000,000 tons, or one-tenth of the British level; and coal output dropped in 1940. With iron ore reserves of 3,000,000,000 tons, the output of steel on the eve of war was not yet 1,000,000 tons, or one-thirteenth of the British level, and below the level of Poland. By 1941 steel output had advanced to 1,250,000 tons: "The expansion might have been larger, but . . . we are large importers of pig iron from India. It would have meant absorbing in India pig iron which was urgently required for our industry here" (the Duke of Devonshire, Undersecretary for India, in the House of Lords, Feb. 3, 1942).

Thus shipping, urgently needed for war transport between Britain and the Far East, is used to transport pig iron from India to Britain and finished steel back to India, rather than manufacture in India. There is no motor industry and no aero-engine industry; India is dependent on overseas supply for all its heavy weapons: planes, tanks, and heavy artillery. Yet India with industrial development could have been the arsenal of the war in the Far East. The government announced in the House of Commons on Oct. 9, 1941, that the manufacture of internal-combustion engines in India would not be "a practical proposition so far as the present war is concerned." By the spring of 1942, after two and a half years of war, it was announced that an exploratory commission was being appointed "to examine the question of production of components of internal-combustion engines or complete engines." Indian industrialists have vociferously complained that, in contrast to the gigantic industrial development in the Dominions since the war, industrial development in India has received a setback. "Unlike the last war, there has been very little industrial expansion." ("Great Britain and the East," June 19, 1941.)

The gigantic available manpower for war production is thus scarcely used. Despite the inexhaustible resources of raw materials for industrial production, and the inexhaustible reserves of manpower, today after nearly two centuries of British rule

in India not one percent of the population is employed in factories, mines, railways, or docks. It was reported as an achievement in November 1941 that 50,000 workers are now employed in the Government Ordnance Factories, or one in 8,000 of the population. By the end of 1941 two batches of *fifty* Indian workers each had arrived in Britain for industrial training—from a population of 400,000,000. And meanwhile the authorities here wring their hands over the problem of manpower.

This policy of throttling Indian industrial development, already criminal in peacetime against the interests and needs of the Indian people, becomes doubly criminal today against the vital needs of the World Alliance and equivalent to direct help to fascism.

BEHIND this lies the influence of the entire policy of colonial domination and exploitation: the denial of national self-determination, the policy which would rather lose the colonial territories temporarily to the fascist invaders than yield power to the peoples themselves; the fear of too rapid advance of the colonial peoples, fear of their industrial development, fear of arming the people, fear of their inevitable advance to freedom.

The consequences of this policy have been seen in Malaya and Singapore, in Java and Burma; where the Japanese invaders were able to sweep forward without popular resistance, or even with active support from sections of the population; where the government, in the words of the *London Times* report on Malaya, "had no roots in the life of the people" and "with the exception of certain sections of the Chinese community—some inspired by Free China's struggle for survival, others by Soviet precept and example—the bulk of the Asiatic population remained spectators from start to finish"; where the great naval base of Singapore was paralyzed because out of the 12,000 Asiatic laborers only 800 remained, while ships could not be unloaded or put to sea because the Asiatic dockers and crews were gone; where the populations were not mobilized or trained or armed to defend themselves, but where, in Burma, the Japanese could recruit and organize whole companies of soldiers for their own purposes.

A radical change of policy is imperative in relation to India and all the colonial peoples. The events in the Far East have brought a shock of twelfth hour awakening even to many who were previously indifferent to this question.

The alliance of Free China and Free India must be the cornerstone of freedom and the fight for freedom in Eastern Asia. The advance of Japan to the gates of India has brought the question of Indian national freedom and self-defense to the forefront of world politics. It is essential that a basis of agreement should be found between the British government and the representatives of the Indian people to make possible the willing cooperation of the Indian people, as equal partners in the alliance of the United Nations, for the common struggle against the common enemy. This basis of agreement can be found, provided that the present dictatorial system of government in India is replaced by the formation of a National Coalition Government, representative of Indian political leaders of all sections prepared to collaborate in the common cause, and with full responsibility and powers, subject to the practical requirements of military cooperation with Britain and the United Nations.

The failure of the Cripps Mission to India to reach an agreement on this basis represented a major strategical defeat for the alliance against fascism. The Cripps Mission failed, not because agreement was impossible, but because it refused the elementary demand for the formation of a representative National Government to mobilize the Indian people for the common struggle. The breakdown did not arise over the hypothetical postwar scheme for the future political regulation of India; this scheme, so far from being an offer of self-government, was of a dubious and undemocratic character,

since it refused the first basis of self-determination, that the democratically elected representatives of the Indian people should be free to determine their own form of government, and it included projects, both fantastic and unworkable, for the future Balkanization of India; but the Indian politicians were sufficiently realistic to recognize that these postwar speculations were of minor practical importance today. Nor did the breakdown occur over the alleged communal difficulty and divisions of the Indian people; this question never arose in the discussions and was only subsequently produced as a supposed explanation of the breakdown. The explicit statement of Jawaharlal Nehru that "at no stage during the talks did any communal or minority difficulty occur" compelled the final admission by Sir Stafford Cripps that "it is quite true that I did not discuss the minority question with Congress" and that "it was not in fact on the communal question that the breakdown came." All sections of Indian political opinion demanded the formation of a responsible National Government, even though the composition of such a government would have had to be the subject of subsequent negotiation. But this stage was never reached, because the principle was refused; it was made clear that, even if all sections were united in this demand, it would be refused. This was the cause of the breakdown.

URGENT steps need now to be taken to remedy this situation before it is too late. The refusal to concede a National Government to India has led to serious deterioration of the political situation in India, tendencies to disintegration and demoralization, and the increased influence of the fatal tendencies to pacifism, passivity, and theories of neutrality in this life-and-death struggle.

The greatest responsibility rests on democratic opinion in Britain to do all in its power to remove the reactionary obstacles from the side of British policy in the way of a settlement; and to ensure that the government immediately reopen negotiations with the Indian National Congress with a view to the formation of a representative and responsible National Government in India, capable of enjoying the confidence of the Indian people and mobilizing them for active defense, in cooperation with the other nations opposed to fascist aggression. Pending the establishment of such a government, all the thousands of anti-fascist prisoners (now mainly working class and peasant prisoners, Socialists, Communists, and trade unionists, who would be in the forefront of rallying the nation for resistance against fascism) should be immediately released, and every form of assistance should be given to the National Congress to rally and organize the resistance of the people to the Japanese attack. Further, the most urgent steps need to be taken to speed the development of Indian industry for war production, to assist with equipment, machine tools, etc., from Britain and the United States, to harness the available small scale industry and handicraft, and to mobilize the manpower for a mighty effort comparable with that of China.

The colonial peoples in all the countries of the world represent a powerful force for freedom. They are the natural enemies of fascism and all oppression and tyranny. It is for the peoples in the democratic countries to understand their strivings, and to find a way to forge their close alliance with them in the common struggle against the fascist aims of world domination. This struggle will prepare the conditions for the full liberation of all peoples and nations throughout the world.

R. PALME DUTT.



"Personally, Schultz, don't you think Der Fuehrer exaggerates a bit?"

Michaels