

INDIA

since

CRIPPS

by

Henry Stanley

AT the moment one of the major items on the agenda of Axis strategy appears to be a drive through the Middle East for the purpose of effecting a junction with the oriental partners of Germany and Italy, either in India or on the borders of Burma. It goes without saying that success in this enterprise will have extremely serious economic and military consequences for China and the U.S.S.R. on the one hand, and Britain and the U.S.A. on the other. If the Axis Powers succeed in establishing themselves along three-quarters of the enormous coastline of the Eurasian continent, they will be nearer victory than ever before. For this reason every citizen of the United Nations can rightly ask what is being done to insure that India will be able to withstand the double blows which may at any time be delivered against her.

The United Nations must frankly face the fact that on the eve of what may be one of the greatest campaigns in history, India is a liability rather than an asset. It is a liability because, being of fundamental importance from a strategic and economic point of view, it is at the same time so weak politically, economically, and militarily, that men and supplies must be sent there to insure resistance against the Axis. Indian economy is colonial in character, and the output of its heavy industry is in no way comparable with that of Japan. India, for example, manufactures no airplane engines, and produces only a limited number of service air frames. The Indian Army is small, relative to the Japanese Army, and until recently it was planned as a force whose duties were chiefly to deal with frontier tribesmen and internal disturbances. It is doubtful whether General Wavell, with all his great ability, has yet been able to convert it into a force capable of dealing

with a modern army which has demonstrated itself capable of defeating British arms quickly and efficiently wherever it has encountered them. According to the *London Times*, there are scarcely one hundred Indian pilots available for the air force, and the Indian Navy is correspondingly weak. An over-all survey of the material resources of India indicates that India is not capable of self-defense unless greatly reinforced by British and American supplies and men.

In this respect India resembles China. The Chinese Government has, however, learned how to mobilize the people and the nation so that in some degree the backwardness of Chinese economy and the poverty of technological equipment is offset by the militant struggle of the Chinese people harassing the Japanese as they lose themselves in the vast spaces of the Chinese homeland. In India, there is no such source of strength to counterbalance India's material weakness. On the contrary, the political order is India's greatest source of weakness. Already martial law has been declared in three provinces and the Viceroy's Council has announced that collective fines will be levied in all cases of sabotage. We believe that martial law and collective fines will fail. We cannot avoid the unpleasant but very real fact that the principal political organizations of the Indian people are either neutral or hostile to the Viceroyal authority, and that the largest political organization, the Indian National Congress, has recently made a declaration of neutrality tinged with hostility.

No British, American, Soviet, or Chinese citizen can any longer afford to deceive himself that the failure of the Cripps Mission has mysteriously paved the way to future understanding. The outcome of the Cripps failure is patent. The democratic and egalitarian forces in the Indian National Congress of whom Nehru is the leader, are in eclipse. Because Nehru was unable to secure any real power from Cripps, the Congress rank and file are in increasing measure giving their support to Gandhi. Gandhi has no known preference for democracy, and he has never yet made any distinction between the fascist and the democratic powers. Since his control of the Congress has been re-affirmed he has given a *mot d'ordre* which can only be interpreted as neutrality. He has instructed the Congress to meet the Japanese with nonviolent non-co-operation—in other words, to treat them just as the Congress treats

the British. In military terms, this means non-resistance, and lest there be any doubt in anyone's mind, he has categorically pronounced against a policy of scorching the earth.

Nehru is a national leader of a wholly different order. He believes passionately in economic and political democracy. The influence of Nehru and his friends is responsible for the fine anti-Axis record of the Indian National Congress. No political organization of any size in the British Commonwealth has as consistently supported the struggle of free China and the European anti-fascist movements as the Congress. This has been Nehru's work. His hope has always been that India shall take a part in the world community as a peaceful, progressive nation. He wishes to have the power to fight the Axis. His policy for defense involves the raising of a national people's army of regulars and irregulars numbering 100,000,000 men. In short, he wishes to duplicate in India the national defense policy of China—the only one suited to an industrially backward nation in the presence of Axis aggression.

The Indian National Congress is not the only

political organization in India, and even generously estimated, its membership numbers but one per cent of the Indian population. We must recognize, however, that it is the only political organization capable of speaking for a high proportion of the people of India without regard to caste, race, religion, or class. Its electoral success in both the Moslem and Hindu areas of India has been demonstrated. Its authority was apparent during the course of Cripps' visit, and Cripps has acknowledged in the British House of Commons that his mission failed when the president of the Congress rejected his declaration. Because the Indian National Congress is a national political organization of considerably greater strength than its nearest rival, and because it is the only important nonsectarian political organization in India, its policy is of the greatest consequence to us. Whether we like it or not, the Congress will be an important factor in any course India may take, and the fact that the British Government has failed to win the Congress as an ally has the gravest implications not for Britain alone, but for the entire democratic world.



II

WHY did the Cripps mission fail? In seeking allies in this war, Britain has not been unsuccessful. When the opportunity presented itself, the British leaders did not allow traditional political formulas, ancient hatreds, and current misunderstandings to stand in the way of an alliance with the U.S.S.R. They acted with courage, breadth of vision and complete sincerity in their approaches to the Soviet leaders, and the hope of victory for the United Nations is the stronger for what Britain has done in this matter. As much may be said for their relations with the United States and, with some qualification, of their relations with China. When the British Cabinet is so demonstrably capable of political understanding and adjustment to new situations, the ordinary observer is astonished by the complete failure of Messrs. Churchill, Amery, and Cripps to achieve even the slightest success in their endeavors to win an alliance on behalf of the United Nations with the principal political organizations of India.

The British Government is deceiving itself if it believes that Cripps' declaration has embodied a new policy. Twenty-five years ago, Mr. Edward Montagu, the Secretary of State for India in Mr. Lloyd George's Government, devised the formula for dealing with agitation for Indian independence. This formula consisted of two tactical parts: a generous promise of future action, and a resolute retention in the immediate present of all essential controls in the hands of the Viceroy. The Cripps' declaration did not represent a departure from this formula. True, his promises were more generous and concrete than any yet made, and his offer of office under the Viceroy was the most comprehensive yet recorded, but in terms of real power, there was nothing new in Cripps' proposals. It would have been very much better had Cripps made no promises for the future, and the fact that he did so would seem to indicate that in dealing with India, the British Government has lost all capacity to understand both itself and India. Promises are suspect in India. Regardless of whether or not the British have been sincere in their past promises, the fact is that even the best promises have never had any meaning satisfactory to the authentically Indian politician. Promises made at the present time are particularly open to suspicion because the future is something which Britain

alone has not the power to shape. Promises, however definite, are gratuitous in the circumstances of the present, because any conditions under which they can be executed will be the product of the struggle not of Britain alone, but of the sacrifices of all the United Nations, and not least, of the Indian people themselves. The Indian leaders know this, and they rightly suspect any declaration of which such promises are essential substance.

The Cripps mission did not, however, fail because of the quality and character of his promises of independence. Sir Stafford has admitted that the discussions with the principal Indian political organization broke down on two questions: defense and the function of the Viceroy. On both these points Cripps insisted that *power* be retained in the hands of men owing their final responsibility to the British Government. Cripps in effect offered the Indian leaders an opportunity to advise the Viceroy on a number of subjects but not upon the important subject of defense. In the Viceroy's Council they could have duties of a precise departmental character, but they could have rights only in so far as the Viceroy thought expedient.

The difference of opinion between Cripps and the Viceroy, on the one hand, and the leaders of the Congress and the Moslem League, on the other, was not an academic constitutional difference but a real difference about policy. As Nehru has made it plain, the Congress policy under his leadership would involve a national *levée en masse* similar to that taking place in China and the U.S.S.R. In the circumstances of India's poverty and technological and industrial backwardness, such a policy would appear to be an absolute necessity, but it is not the policy of either the Viceroy or the Commander in Chief. Nehru does not regard such a defense policy as an alternative to the operations of British and American armed forces in India, but as a supplement. British and American technicians, trained troops, and supplies are as indispensable to India as they are to China, and no responsible Indian leader who advocates resistance to the Axis believes otherwise. It may safely be said that Indians of every political complexion are prepared to honor General Wavell as the Commander in Chief of the Army of the United Nations fighting for the defense of a free India, in the manner that the Filipinos honor General MacArthur, an American soldier and a one-time participant in the conquest of the Philippines.

III

IN their dealings with India, the British Government sees the necessity for action but the British leaders, including Cripps, remain bogged down in traditional political formulas which are completely inadequate in the circumstances of the hour. They are not even true to their own traditions evolved in the course of their dealings with Canada, Australia, and South Africa. Prior to the grant of responsible government, Canada was divided into antithetical racial, religious, and class groups, and the bitterness between the English-speaking and French-speaking parts of the country was extreme. Great Britain did not wait for the Canadians to settle their differences before responsible government was granted. The British Government let the Canadians work the matter out for themselves. Although the question of racial dissension is not yet settled a century later, real progress has been made by the Canadians acting by themselves, and the races have grown together as the measure of their political independence has increased.

A great many antithetical theses can be proved from history, but there does seem some ground for believing on the basis of Britain's own history that state building involves a selective political process. The problem is not to insure the rights of minorities regardless of their political capacity, their organization, and their ideals. Cripps and Halifax in their public utterance seem to believe that the Indian princes have a value equal to that of the Indian National Congress in any scheme of national development. They seem to think that one tendency in the Congress is about as embarrassing to them as another. They seem incapable of qualitative judgment and of understanding that some political forces have the capacity to strengthen Indian resistance while others cannot but weaken India.

In any overtures made by the United Nations to the Indian leaders, the test of alliance must be willingness and capacity to maintain Indian unity, willingness to draw the peasantry and working people of India into the life of the state, willingness to resist with arms the Axis Powers, and willingness to help build a new order based upon international economic and political co-operation between states. It does not require much imagination to realize that, if Britain, the United States, the U.S.S.R., and China make it absolutely clear

that they will unequivocally support with all their power any national government of India which will seek such objectives, that government will be able to keep order, to win the affectionate support of the vast majority of Indian people, and will make India into a real asset to the United Nations. It is a gross deception to say that such a government so supported would be at the mercy of disgruntled minorities of Moslem and Hindu reactionaries and sectarians, disappointed Punjabi militarists and depressed castes. India is a badly divided nation at the present time, but like any other nation, unity will grow with common national experience. National resistance against Japan has transformed China, and national resistance by India will transform that country economically, politically, and socially.

The United Nations have a duty to the enslaved nations of Europe, and we cannot afford in our own interest and theirs, to dissipate our strength over the face of the world because there are vast colonial nations incapable and unwilling to take up the task of defending themselves. Indian leaders of great influence have expressed their determination to fight on their own account. We must give them the power to do so, fully realizing that such a gift will transform India. The events which have taken place in Burma and Malaya demonstrate that anarchy and revolution are close to the surface of large sections of Asiatic society. These forces cannot be exorcized by Churchillian blunt answers. They are there and we must learn how to make them operate against Japan as they are doing in China, and not against us as they have done thus far in the rest of Asia.

ANALOGY

*I saw a thousand men lay down
Their lives for one poor summit;
A nation arm for seven years
Against a child, and bomb it.
I've seen a man plough seven fields
For one poor loaf of millet;
And in his heart hold one short word
Against his love, to kill it.*

RALPH GUSTAFSON

ARAB ALIGNMENTS

in
the Near East

AS these lines are being written the Axis forces are 225 miles within the borders of Egypt. For the fourth time since the beginning of this war, the cities of this ancient country are in danger of destruction by nazi and fascist planes and Rommel's artillery. Yet the King and Parliament of Egypt have stubbornly refused to declare war even after their territory was repeatedly invaded, declining to go beyond the stage of "non-belligerency" despite the Anglo-Egyptian treaty of alliance.

The attitude of Egypt is not easily understood unless one fits it into the mosaic of the entire situation in the Near East. But that situation is little known outside of a few government offices. A shortage of vital accessories in the Libyan desert is instantly registered in Cairo and flashed to Washington; within a few hours the missing parts are on their way by plane from a factory in Michigan to the assembly plant in Egypt. But intellectually and politically the Near East has remained to us what Czechoslovakia was to Chamberlain in the halcyon days of Munich—a region remote and exotic "about which we know so little." The mischief wrought by the psychological "remoteness" of Czechoslovakia is too well known. It is no exaggeration to say that the "remoteness" of the Near East constitutes a greater danger not only in the immediate sense but in the long view—a danger which must be overcome if civilization is to escape future disasters comparable to those of the past.

At the outbreak of the present war the Near East was a political question mark, as the Ottoman Empire had been a quarter of a century earlier. At that time Turkey, an independent but rickety empire on its way to dissolution, broke from its moorings to take the fatal plunge on the side of Germany. In 1939, the Near East presented a radically different pat-

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tern: a group of countries ranging in status from complete independence to semi-independence and mandate, but all linked with the Western Democracies to whom most of them owed such degrees of freedom as they enjoyed. Three of the countries, Egypt, Turkey, and Iraq were—and still are—formally allied to Britain by treaty; while others, Palestine and Transjordan, Syria and Lebanon, as well as Arabia proper with its peripheral principalities (Yemen excepted) were within the British or French orbits.

Despite these political affiliations, the situation has been an unhappy one from the Allied point of view. With the single exception of Palestine—unique in more than one respect—the attitude of these countries and their populations toward the Democracies has ranged from tepid neutrality to open hostility. Not one of the three enumerated "allies" has joined in the struggle against the Axis. Turkey has clung to a precarious neutrality out of considerations of caution and expediency, but there are disquieting signs of its veering toward the Axis as a result of Von Papen's ceaseless intrigues and dynamic diplomacy, and—more important—of nazi victories in Russia and Africa. Iraq, did draw the sword not to fight the Axis, but to strike against her British ally at a particularly dangerous moment, and had to be subjugated by force of arms. Throughout the vast region, larger in extent than half the continent of Europe, there has been hardly a spot which the Democracies could regard as terra firma.

As for Egypt, the strong influence of Count Mazzolini and other Italians upon the Court has long been notorious. King Farouk in common with his entourage has been a convinced believer in the triumph of the Axis. In a private conversation with an American visitor, he commented sadly upon the impending doom of