

SOJOURNER TRUTH was a great Negro woman Abolitionist. She fought not only for her own people, but for America when its very life was at stake. Now once again this America, born and nurtured and made strong in two great wars of freedom, fights for its life, fights together with many other nations against the monstrous despotism that threatens all mankind. Sojourner Truth's people, the millions of black folk who have come after her, no longer chattel slaves, but citizens of the United States, take their place in this new and greater liberation war. But do they? Are they allowed to?

What happened in Detroit over the past weekend is enough to make one sick at heart. Negro defense workers who attempted to move into the new Sojourner Truth housing project, granted them after a long struggle, were assaulted by a mob of Ku Kluxers and other hoodlums, armed with rifles, shotguns, knives, and clubs. Only a small force of police were on hand and they proceeded to arrest 250 Negroes and only four of the lynch gang. Organized labor in Detroit and both Negro and white public-spirited organizations are outraged at this exhibition of Hitlerism in the very heart of the nation's war industry; they are demanding strong measures to protect the Negro tenants and end fascist hooliganism.

This anti-Negro pogrom came as the culmination of a controversy that ought to fill every American with a sense of shame for his country. About a year ago federal housing authorities agreed to build a modest Negro defense housing project at Nevada and Fenelon Avenues in North Detroit. Real estate sharks and Ku Klux Klan elements at once began a determined campaign to prevent the project from being assigned to Negroes. They found a ready friend at court in Rep. Rudolph G. Tenerowicz, an opponent of President Roosevelt's anti-Axis foreign policy. A prolonged struggle developed, in which certain poll-tax congressmen were not loth to do their bit for "white supremacy" in Detroit. Under the reactionary cannonade Defense Housing Coordinator Charles F. Palmer, now removed as a result of the recent reorganization of the housing setup, did an about-face and instructed the Detroit Housing Commission to start taking applications from white families. The forces of decency and patriotism in Detroit roused themselves. A broad Citizens Committee was organized, the CIO and AFL entered the fight, other organizations let themselves be heard, Mayor Edward Jeffries, Jr., lent his support. The battle raged back and forth, but finally it was won.

AND then came Saturday, February 28, the happy day when 200 Negro families were to move into their new modern homes. On that day, 7,000 miles away, MacArthur's men were shedding their blood for the homes of all Americans, and those that died and those that lived and fought on were not all white men. On that day, at scores of scattered places in the South Pacific, yellow- and brown-skinned men were stopping with their bodies the bullets aimed at the heart of our own country. And on that day a murderous Ku Klux mob, using force and violence to defy the city of Detroit and the government of the United States, assaulted and terrorized black men and women who are defending America with their labor and their sacrifice.

This is more than a national scandal. This is treason. This is the fifth column in the flesh. To yield to this mob, to coddle those who inflamed them with race hatred, to deny to our black citizens the rights of free Americans, *including the right to make their full contribution to their country's war against enslavement*, is to strike at America from behind, to jeopardize

its whole future. Unfortunately, this is more than a local infection. Only two days earlier Leon A. Ransom, distinguished Negro attorney and acting dean of Howard University law school, was attacked by a former deputy sheriff in the Davidson county courthouse, Nashville, Tenn. It is only a few weeks since a Negro was brutally lynched in Missouri. And despite progress that has been made, discrimination in the armed forces and in war industries feeds the underground streams of race hatred that burst so violently into the open in Detroit.

Viewing the matter from the standpoint of the narrowest self-interest, can white Americans of any class or group afford to tolerate practices that weaken the fight against the fascist

## GET THE KKK *by the Editors*

enemy? The United Nations are today paying a heavy price in the Far East for the age-old mistreatment of the colored peoples, for the failure to enlist India, Burma, and Malaya as full partners in the struggle. Shall we wait until the invader is on our own shores before we permit our Negro fellow Americans to fight as equals with us?

THE outrage in Detroit calls for federal action. The government should lose no time in assuring the tenants of the Sojourner Truth project the homes to which they are entitled. And action is also called for against the Ku Klux Klan and other fifth columnists who foment race hatred and actively sabotage production in the war plants.

In last week's issue NEW MASSES published an article by a Negro editor, Louis E. Martin, of the *Michigan Chronicle*, warning of the dangers in continued discrimination against the Negro and other colored peoples. "The Japanese," he wrote, "are desperately trying to make capital out of an admittedly stupid attitude toward non-white peoples. We must not give comfort to our enemies by pursuing a policy which cannot but weaken the unity and solidarity which is demanded of us now. Our color and racial attitudes must not become our Achilles heel, now or in the future."

What happened in Detroit on February 28 makes that warning ring out to the farthest corners of the land.



# INDIA WATCHES . . .

**What are London's plans? Meanwhile, Claude Cockburn cables, "The Japanese are halfway across Burma. . . ."**

*London (by cable), February 27.*

**W**ITH the Japanese halfway across Burma it seems that we are rather more than halfway toward working out a new plan for India. Things moving at the pace they do, the plan may be common knowledge by the time you read this. In any case it cannot be more than a halfway plan.

The question is whether it will lead immediately to constructive action for the defense of India or not. Here is the background. According to best informed London circles there was a plan a couple of weeks ago under which the following things would happen. First, the Indian office would be merged into the Dominion Affairs office—under Clement Attlee. Secondly, representatives of the "unofficial" Indian Nationalist Movement would be given the portfolios of Defense and Finance in the Viceroy's Council. I believe that plan really was on the stocks—and a bit more than on the stocks. And we can chalk up as point number one the fact that, abominably slowly as everything moves on this side of a terribly dangerous situation, this did represent a real advance, a real breakthrough against the obstructionists here. And I have the strong impression that when Chiang Kai-shek made his historic statement at New Delhi, he was under the impression that the plan was going through.

A FEW DAYS AGO came a hitch. I do not know for certain just where it came from, although if you walk down Whitehall you will find

twenty different people to give you twenty contradictory "inside" explanations. The story which seems most credible is that some of the "old India hands" at present in high places declared the whole thing to be too dangerous. That would mean, presumably, Sir John Anderson, Lord President of the Council. Also it must be recalled that L. S. Amery, still Secretary of State for India, the man who long ago declared that we must not condemn Japanese aggression because that would condemn British policy in India and Egypt, has a long and silly record to defend. So far he has attempted to defend his indefensible position by declaring that the Indians themselves must "get together" before the British government can do anything about anything.

A somewhat brighter spot in the picture is the fact that under pressure of the imminent danger from Japan, very important elements here who previously were content with Amery's futilities are content with them no longer. And you begin to hear in many quarters the expressed realization that if only the British would let the Indians have a national government of their own, the religious and other differences of which so much can be made here would on the one hand tend to disappear, and on the other would be dealt with effectively by an Indian national government. Of course there would be fifth columnism. Of course there would be persons and groups seduced and suborned by the Japanese Pan-Asiatic propaganda. Of course sections of the Moslem population would be at-

tracted by Japan's claim to be the "new leader of Islam." But the point is that an Indian national government could deal ruthlessly with such elements. It could raise and arm forces which would be quite capable of treating such elements as they ought to be treated.

As an editorial writer in the London *New Statesman and Nation* remarks, "In the past all our efforts have been qualified by reservations which in effect enabled and even invited the minorities to put their veto on any advance. What Indians chiefly mean by independence is that we should cease to play this traditional game of divide and rule. When once we reach the point of surrendering what Marshal Chiang calls 'real political power' the Moslem minority will adjust itself to the inevitable. The feud is a painful fact, but we have made it the central reality of Indian life by our well meant efforts to separate the warring creeds. At the center, when a federal India governs herself, the views men take about tariffs, railway communications, and the technicalities of defense will not depend on whether they derive their faith in the supernatural from the Koran or the Vedic hymns. Taxes strike Hindu and Moslem much as the rain falls, on the just and the unjust impartially. The real divisions in this modern world must increasingly follow lines not of creed but of economic function."

However, there was certainly some kind of hitch in that plan which would have been a definite move in the direction of national government. As a result of the hitch a new plan had to be evolved. And according to those in London who should know and who claim that they were asked about the matter as representative of Indian opinion, the new plan was a very different pair of shoes. This plan too involved the merging of the India office in the Dominions Affairs office. In fact at the London end it seemed to be the same plan as before. But according to these sources—which are not official—the scheme for giving additional portfolios, including the portfolios of Defense and Finance to representatives of the Indian national movement, was dropped. And the Indian reaction to that was summed up in the words, "This is home rule for the Viceroy."

It was felt, that is to say, that there is no advance worth speaking of if India is created a Dominion in London while being left in the same position as before as regards the practical government of India from New Delhi. Yet it does seem that that was just the situation as it stood on the eve of Cripps' first speech to Parliament—or a few days before that. So far as can be ascertained here, all responsible progressive opinion in India either has rejected or is going to reject any such offer.

IT MUST BE SAID, however, that the agreement—assuming there really exists such an agreement—to abolish the India office and merge it into the Dominions Affairs office does represent a certain movement forward. It is hard to imagine that Cripps, who at a very