

Indian freedom, even at the risk of thereby opening the gates to Japan; which would rather surrender the control of India to the Japanese militarists than to the Indian people; and which opposes the demand of the Indian people to be an equal ally of the United Nations.

This is the unhappy chapter in the recent relations of Britain and India whose record we must now trace, in order to seek to find the path forward to a solution, for the mutual benefit of the Indian and British peoples in the present urgent world situation.

XV. The Present Crisis in India

"Asked how many Indians supported the Government of India, he answered: 'I would say, none.'"—Sir Feroz Khan Noon, Defense Member of the Viceroy's Council, in a press interview, September 13, 1942.

I. INDIA AND THE WAR

The Indian people through their national leaders declared their opposition to fascism and their alignment with the democratic and progressive forces of the world against fascism long before the outbreak of the present war.

Already in 1936, at a time when the British and French Governments were supporting "non-intervention" in relation to the German-Italian war of aggression against Spanish Democracy, the Indian National Congress was proclaiming at its session at Faizpur in December, 1936:

"Fascist aggression has increased, the fascist powers forming alliances and grouping themselves together for war with the intention of dominating Europe and the world and crushing political and social freedom. The Congress is fully conscious of the necessity of facing this world menace in co-operation with the progressive nations and the peoples of the world."

In February, 1938, the Haripura session declared for support of "collective security" and condemned the policies of complicity with fascist aggression which were bringing nearer the menace of

war. The Tripuri session in the spring of 1939 explicitly disassociated India from the Munich policy:

"The Congress records its entire disapproval of the British foreign policy culminating in the Munich Pact, the Anglo-Italian Agreement and the recognition of Rebel Spain. This policy has been one of deliberate betrayal of democracy, repeated breaches of pledges, the ending of the system of collective security, and co-operation with Governments which are avowed enemies of democracy and freedom. . . . The Congress disassociates itself entirely from the British foreign policy which has consistently aided fascist powers and helped the destruction of democratic countries."

Solidarity was proclaimed during these years with the struggles of the Ethiopian, Spanish and Chinese peoples; Medical Missions were sent to Spain and to China; the Indian National Congress was affiliated to the International Peace Campaign; in 1938 a boycott was proclaimed against Japanese goods.

When war broke out between Britain and Germany in September, 1939, and India was declared a belligerent without consultation, the Indian National Congress in its resolution of September 15, 1939, re-affirmed its opposition to Nazism and fascism and support for democracy, but demanded a clear statement of aims from the British Government, whether it was fighting for imperialist aims or democratic aims:

"If the war is to defend the status quo, imperialist possessions, colonies, vested interests and privilege, then India can have nothing to do with it. If, however, the issue is democracy, then India is intensely interested in it. The Committee are convinced that the interests of Indian democracy do not conflict with the interests of British democracy or of world democracy. . . ."

"If Great Britain fights for the maintenance and extension of democracy, then she must necessarily end imperialism in her own possessions, establish full democracy in India, and the Indian people must have the right of self-determination. . . . A free democratic India will gladly associate herself with other free nations for mutual defense against aggression. . . ."

"The Working Committee, therefore, invite the Brit-

ish Government to declare in unequivocal terms what their war aims are in regard to democracy and imperialism and the new order that is envisaged, in particular how these aims are going to apply to India and to be given effect to in the present. Do they include the elimination of imperialism and the treatment of India as a free nation whose policy will be guided in accordance with the wishes of her people?"

The negative reply of the Viceroy to this approach (refusing any explicit declaration of war aims as premature, "unwise" and "impracticable," and offering only a "consultative group" to be associated with the Government) led to the resignation of all the Congress Ministries in October, 1939. In the spring of 1940 the Congress, meeting at Ramgarh, declared its view that "the recent pronouncements made on behalf of the British Government in regard to India demonstrate that Great Britain is carrying on the war fundamentally for imperialist ends. . . . Under these circumstances it is clear that the Congress cannot in any way, directly or indirectly, be a party to the war."

In the summer of 1940, following the Nazi advance in Europe, the collapse of France, and the deepening crisis of the war, the Congress made a new offer of co-operation, conditional on the recognition of Indian independence and the establishment of "a provisional National Government at the center, which, though formed as a transitory measure, should be such as to command the confidence of all elected members in the Central Legislature. . . . If these measures are adopted, it will enable the Congress to throw in its full weight in the efforts for the effective organization of the defense of the country." This offer, which entailed the explicit rejection of Gandhi's line of non-violence in relation to external defense, was carried by a two-thirds majority at Poona in July, 1940. The voting showed 91 to 63 for the rejection of non-violence, and 95 to 47 for the offer of conditional co-operation.

Once again, however, this offer met with a negative reply from the British Government. The Viceroy's statement of August 8, 1940 (commonly referred to as "the August Offer," and constituting the basis of the subsequent Cripps Plan and other statements of policy up to the present date), declared that the British Government "could not contemplate transfer of their

present responsibilities for the peace and welfare of India to any system of government whose authority is directly denied by large and powerful elements in India's national life"—*i.e.*, that the Moslem League and Princes should be empowered to veto the formation of any Indian National Government. As an alternative, it proposed: (1) the post-war establishment of "a body representative of the principal elements in India's national life in order to devise the framework of the new Constitution"; (2) the enlargement of the Viceroy's Executive Council by the inclusion of additional nominated Indians; (3) the appointment of a "War Advisory Council" of representatives of the Indian States and other Indians.

The unsatisfactory character of this reply led the Congress to adopt an individual civil disobedience campaign, under the leadership of Gandhi, which was inaugurated in October, 1940. Extensive arrests and imprisonments followed in the succeeding months (12,000 in the United Provinces alone by May 24, 1941, according to an official statement, and estimated to have reached 20,000 for all India, including 398 members of Provincial Legislative Assemblies or one-quarter of the total membership of those Assemblies, 31 ex-Ministers and 22 members of the Central Legislature).

Such was the situation of deadlock when the events of the latter half of 1941, the German attack on the Soviet Union, the British-Soviet Pact, the extension of the British-Soviet alliance into the alliance of the United Nations under the leadership of Britain, the United States, the Soviet Union and China, and the Japanese attack in the Far East brought a profound change in the character of the war.

Indian national opinion was quick to respond to this transformation of the war and its significance for India. As Jawaharlal Nehru declared in December, 1941: "The progressive forces of the world are now aligned with the group represented by Russia, Britain, America and China."

Similarly the Bombay Provincial Trades Union Congress adopted a resolution in December, 1941, declaring:

"The war which the Soviet Union and Great Britain are jointly waging against Hitler fascism with the assistance of the U.S.A. is one and indivisible, and can no longer be regarded by the working class or the people of

India as an imperialist war to which they could afford to take a neutral or hostile attitude. . . .

"The All-India Trade Union Congress can no longer pursue the policy of hostility or non-co-operation or neutrality towards the war efforts of even the present Government. We must vigorously and boldly tell the workers that this war of the Soviet peoples and of the British people is our war as well. It is a war which the people have to win in their own interests. We want the war effort to be increased a thousandfold."

The All-India Peasants' Organization, or Kisan Sabha, declared through a statement of its leader, N. G. Ranga, in the same month:

"The Indian peasants associate themselves wholeheartedly with the Allies in their fight against the Fascist Powers, but declare that their material and whole-hearted support will be greater and more effective if the freedom of India and other dependencies is conceded."

Thus a new path opened out, alike for the Indian national movement and for the British Government, to find the basis of co-operation of the two nations in the common tasks of the world alliance against fascism. Not all sections of the national movement adopted at once such a clear-cut and positive response to the changed character of the war as in the expressions quoted. Some sections still followed the "non-violent" pacifist outlook of Gandhi. Others were suspicious of any co-operation with British imperialism. But the main responsible leadership of the national movement, represented by the President of the Congress, Maulana Azad, and the Secretary, Jawaharlal Nehru, with majority support, sought to find the basis of co-operation as an equal ally of the United Nations. It was clearly in the interests of Britain and the United Nations to endeavor to reach a basis of agreement with these forces. Thus a favorable situation confronted the British Government, from the second half of 1941, provided there was readiness to meet the new situation in a new spirit.

The first reaction of the British Government was negative. Although the Atlantic Charter in August had proclaimed "the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live," the Prime Minister's statement in September specifically excluded India from its operation (see page

185). This rebuff angered Indian national opinion, and strengthened the hostile forces.

Nevertheless, the Government's release of the principal Congress leaders in December, 1941, represented a first step which opened the way to the possibility of a new orientation and the advance to a basis of co-operation.

By the end of December, 1941, the Bardoli resolution of the National Congress (ratified in January, 1942) declared for the principle of armed resistance to the Axis as an ally of the United Nations, provided India could mobilize under a National Government. The resolution stated:

"While there has been no change in British policy towards India, the Committee must nevertheless take into consideration the new world situation which has arisen by the developments of the war and its approach to India. The sympathies of Congress must inevitably lie with the peoples who are subject to aggression and are fighting for their freedom; but only a free and independent India can be in a position to undertake the defense of the country on a national basis."

Following the adoption of this resolution, Gandhi was relieved of leadership of the National Congress, because of his disagreement with the abandonment of non-violence.

The *Times of India* commented on the resolution:

"The resolution reopens the door to agreement with the British Government, thereby giving a valuable lead which we hope will be reciprocated."

The way was open, given only a minimum of statesmanship and favorable response from the side of Britain.

This favorable opening was further assisted by the visit in February, 1942, of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek to India, with his simultaneous public appeal to India and to Britain (see page 9). He emphasized to Indian opinion that there was "no middle course" between "the two camps of aggression and anti-aggressions." To Britain he made the plea to give "as speedily as possible real political power" to the people of India in order to enable them to participate with full strength in the war. It will be noted that he urged "real political power" for the Indian people to enable them to strengthen their participation in the war, *i.e.*, as a war measure, not as a post-war promise. This

viewpoint corresponded to that of the Indian national movement.

Similarly, the Australian Minister for External Affairs expressed the same viewpoint in February, 1942, urging self-government for India *now during the war* in order to strengthen Indian participation in the war: "We sympathize with the aspirations of the Indian people to become one of the self-governing nations, and as such to take part in the defense of the Allied cause in Asia." (Dr. H. V. Evatt, Australian Commonwealth Minister for External Affairs, speech in the Australian Parliament, February 27, 1942.)

On February 22, 1942, President Roosevelt explicitly declared that the Atlantic Charter applied to "the whole world" (thus tacitly correcting Mr. Churchill's statement of September, 1941, quoted on page 185): "The Atlantic Charter applies not only to the parts of the world that border the Atlantic, but to the whole world." (President Roosevelt, broadcast, February 22, 1942.)

It is important to recognize this role of American-Australian-Chinese pressure in order to understand the context of the Indian national demand and the relative isolation within the United Nations of the British official viewpoint which still rejected a responsible National Government in India during the war.

By the spring of 1942 a favorable situation had thus been created. The ball was at Britain's feet. If there was still reluctance and resistance from British official quarters, the arrival of the Japanese at Rangoon in March helped to supply the necessary impetus.

On March 8 Rangoon fell.

On March 11 the Cripps Mission to India was announced.

2. THE CRIPPS MISSION

The Cripps Mission to India from March 23 to April 11, 1942, was the turning-point in the present crisis of British-Indian relations, and the starting-point of the deterioration which has followed. It is therefore of vital importance to reach a clear judgment as to what was at issue, and the reasons for the break-down, especially as sharp polemics and contradictory statements have been made by the protagonists on both sides as to some of the details of the negotiations. Nevertheless, the main

facts stand out with perfect clearness from the official documents and statements on both sides.

The Cripps Plan, or constitutional proposals for India drafted by the British War Cabinet and brought by Sir Stafford Cripps to India to discuss with Indian political leaders as a basis for a settlement, consisted of two main parts:

1. Post-War Proposals: (a) Dominion Status for "a new Indian Union"; (b) a "constitution-making body" to be set up immediately after the war, partly elected by the membership of the Provincial Legislative Assemblies to be elected after the war, on a basis of proportional representation, and partly nominated by the Princes in proportion to the population of their States, to frame a new Constitution for India; (c) right of any Province of British India to remain outside, and either continue on the present basis or frame a new Constitution as a separate Dominion with equal rights; (d) Treaty between Britain and the "constitution-making body" to "make provision, in accordance with the undertakings given by His Majesty's Government, for the protection of racial and religious minorities."

2. Immediate Proposals during the War: Retention of power by Britain, with consultative co-operation of Indian representatives.

The last point—the refusal of a wartime National Government with powers—is the crucial point of the proposals and caused the breakdown.

It will be seen that the Cripps Plan, despite the skillful press publicity given to it as a new and epoch-making offer, represented no basic change of policy, but repeated the familiar lines of the "August Offer" of the Viceroy in 1940, which had already been rejected by all sections of Indian opinion. The semi-official historian of the Cripps Mission admits the truth of this:

"The Draft Declaration did not represent a drastic change of policy.... In principle, in fact, the Draft Declaration went no further than the 'August Offer.'" (Professor R. Coupland, *The Cripps Mission*, Oxford University Press, 1942, p. 30.)

Further:

"The Draft Declaration implicitly ruled out any major change in the form of the Constitution during the war." (*Ibid.*, p. 31.)

The post-war proposals were thus of only hypothetical interest and had no bearing on the urgent wartime problem of the mobilization of the Indian people under a National Government of their own leaders. These post-war proposals would indeed be open to weighty objection on the grounds of their denial of the principles of democracy and self-determination, if this issue were of any present practical importance.

1. Independence is denied to India, although this is the demand of all sections in India, and Dominion Status is to be imposed, although this has been rejected by all sections in India;

2. The "constitution-making body," in place of being a Constituent Assembly elected by universal adult suffrage, as proposed by the Congress, would be elected on the basis of the restricted, gerrymandered and unrepresentative electoral system of the 1935 Constitution (described on page 173), with a franchise of 11 per cent of the population and weighted communal divisions;

3. The Princes' representatives on the "constitution-making body," numbering one-quarter of the whole, would not need to be elected at all, thus disfranchising an additional 90 millions of the Indian population;

4. The proposals for the partition of India would encourage the formation of a series of Ulsters in India, in defiance of Indian national feeling;

5. The retention by the British Government of the right to determine at its own discretion what constitutes "provision, in accordance with the undertakings given by His Majesty's Government, for the protection of racial and religious minorities" could be interpreted to cover the widest interference with the new constitution in practice, and negates Dominion Status (contrast the unchecked legislative discrimination against the racial majority in South Africa).

These questions, however, are only of academic interest. The fate of India after the war will not be settled by paper documents of this character. On the contrary, the fate of post-war India, as of the post-war world, is being shaped in the crucible of present events.

The crux of the Cripps Plan turned on the present wartime proposals. The text of these is important to set out:

"During the critical period which now faces India and until the new Constitution can be framed, His

Majesty's Government must inevitably bear the responsibility for and retain control and direction of the defense of India as part of their world war effort, but the task of organizing to the full the military, moral and material resources of India must be the responsibility of the Government of India with the co-operation of the peoples of India. His Majesty's Government desire and invite the immediate and effective participation of the leaders of the principal sections of the Indian people in the counsels of their country, of the Commonwealth and of the United Nations. Thus they will be enabled to give their active and constructive help in the discharge of a task which is vital and essential for the future freedom of India."

Did this elaborate statement cover any suggestion of a National Government with effective powers, comparable to a Cabinet in a democratic country, subject to the overriding control of the direction of the war by the United Nations Councils and their military command in the field? The Indian national leaders in the beginning of their negotiations with Sir Stafford Cripps gathered from him the impression that it did. Later, it was made emphatically clear that it did not, that the Viceroy would retain absolute power and discretion, as at present, and that no important change in constitutional practice could be considered during the war. On this the negotiations broke down.

In these negotiations the Congress went to considerable lengths of concessions in the hope of reaching a positive settlement, offering to serve under a British Viceroy, provided they had real responsibility and powers, and to accept a British Commander-in-Chief, not only for the control of military operations, but as a member of the Cabinet.

In vain. They were told that British power must remain absolute and dictatorial, that an Indian Minister of Defense might at the most control canteens and stationery. When they tried to negotiate, in order to narrow the margin of disagreement, they were told, "Take it or leave it." This "take it or leave it" attitude gave the impression that there was no real intention to negotiate, but rather to prepare the grounds for a future conflict.

This impression was strengthened by the unfortunate speech of Lord Halifax on April 7, while the negotiations were still in

progress, already anticipating failure and declaring that the British Government would in that event maintain power alone and that the Cripps Mission would have served its purpose in establishing an unanswerable case against future critics of British power in India.

The final resolution of the Congress rejecting the proposals declared:

"Any proposal concerning the future of India must demand attention and scrutiny, but in today's grave crisis it is the present that counts. . . . For this the present British War Cabinet's proposals are vague and altogether incomplete, and there would appear to be no vital changes in the present structure contemplated. . . .

"The essential fundamental prerequisite for the assumption of responsibility by the Indian people is their realization as a fact that they are free and are in charge of maintaining and defending their freedom. . . . The present Government of India, as well as its Provincial agencies, are lacking in competence and are incapable of shouldering the burden of India's defense. It is only the people of India, through their popular representatives, who may shoulder this burden worthily. But this can only be done by present freedom and full responsibility being cast upon them. The Committee are therefore unable to accept the proposals put forward by the British War Cabinet."

The Cripps Mission failed, not primarily because of the highly dubious character of the post-war plan which it offered, nor because of the political divisions in India which were only subsequently brought forward as a reason for failure.*

* The myth that the Cripps negotiations broke down, not because of the refusal of Indian self-government by the British authorities, but because of the inability of the Indian representatives to agree among themselves, owing to their communal divisions, has been sedulously spread by official propaganda. It was given initial currency by Sir Stafford Cripps' very misleading broadcast after the breakdown, when he declared that "The War Cabinet were in a position rather like an arbitrator who tries to arrange a fair compromise between conflicting points of view" (a curious kind of "arbitrator" engaged in maintaining his despotic power against a subject nation demanding freedom), and drawing the moral of the breakdown that "some day, somehow, the great communities and parties in India will have to agree."

It failed because, under cover of the dubious post-war plan, it rejected out of hand and ruled out the one issue that mattered—the establishment of a responsible National Government now with effective powers for Indian participation in the war. This rejection, it was made clear, was independent of the agreement or disagreement of the various sections of Indian political opinion. The elaborate hypothetical post-war plan was only the window-dressing to cover the rejection of the one real present issue.

This rejection ran counter to the entire range of Indian opinion, including the most moderate opinion. Not only the Congress, but every important Indian organization turned down the Cripps proposals.

On the breakdown the *Calcutta Statesman* gave its verdict:

"So long as the India Office and the Government of India draft the proposals, no emissary can succeed, and no effort will be made to cope with the hourly increasing danger to this country. . . .

"The blame lies with the India Office and the official section of the Government of India."

Nehru declared:

"If Sir Stafford thinks that the position in India has improved by his visit, he is grievously mistaken. The gulf is greater today than before."

This myth was exploded by Nehru's explicit statement that "at no stage during the talks did any communal or minority difficulty occur." Confronted with this statement in the House of Commons on April 28, 1942, Sir Stafford Cripps was compelled to admit that "it is quite true that I did not discuss the minority question with Congress" and that "it was not in form on the communal question that the breakdown came."

Another myth given currency by Sir Stafford Cripps in the House of Commons on September 11, 1942, alleged that the Congress Working Committee had adopted an unpublished resolution accepting the proposals, but that Gandhi then intervened and secured the reversal of the decision. This allegation was immediately repudiated by Gandhi, Nehru and Rajagopalachariar; and their evidence must be accepted as more authoritative on this point, as they were present at the proceedings of the Congress Working Committee (though Gandhi was in fact absent from Delhi in the later stages), and Sir Stafford Cripps was not.

These myths (and many more, for which space cannot be spared) are only of interest as evidence of the guilty conscience of British official policy, which is unwilling to admit the plain cause of the breakdown through the refusal of Indian self-government.

3. NON-CO-OPERATION AND CONFLICT

Deterioration in the political situation rapidly followed the breakdown of the Cripps negotiations.

The British Government declared that nothing more could be done, and embarked on a campaign of extremely partisan propaganda to blacken the Indian national movement, and to prove to world opinion with all the age-old arguments the supposedly unrepresentative character of the Congress, the hopeless political divisions of the Indian people and their incapacity for self-government.

The National Congress, frustrated in its desire to co-operate, after a period of hesitation and divided counsels, slid down the inclined plane toward non-co-operation as the weapon to enforce the national demand.

A plea was put forward by a section of Congress opinion, represented by the Madras ex-Premier, C. Rajagopalachariar and by the Indian Communists, for a more positive policy, despite the British rejection of the Indian national claim, to endeavor to build a National Front in agreement with the Moslem League and all other organizations, even at the expense of concessions to sectional demands, for the sake of organizing united national resistance in the hour of danger against Japan. This proposal was rejected by the All-India Congress Committee in May by 120 votes to 15, although the Congress President, Maulana Azad, made clear that the Congress would be prepared to nominate a delegation to negotiate with the Moslem League in order to reach a common basis. Mr. Rajagopalachariar resigned from the Congress to pursue the advocacy of his policy.

Direct leadership of the Congress passed back into the hands of Gandhi, who had been removed from leadership since December, 1941. Gandhi was preaching his pacifist doctrine of (1) non-violent resistance to Japan; (2) non-co-operation with the British authorities; (3) moral sympathy for the Allied cause against fascism; (4) endeavor to keep India out of the conflict, and opposition to Nehru's advocacy of armed resistance, the formation of guerillas and a "scorched earth" policy. The Congress did not agree with Gandhi's pacifism, but moved over to regard his proposals of non-co-operation as the only remaining weapon to win Indian freedom and thus make possible the effective defense

of India. Conversations between Gandhi, Nehru and Azad in June resulted in a basis of agreement being reached, which found fruit in the non-co-operation resolution adopted by the Working Committee on July 14. Serious anti-fascist leaders and advocates of co-operation with the United Nations thus passed into the wake of Gandhi and his dangerous proposals for a non-co-operation campaign at the moment of threatening Japanese attack.

Axis propaganda was delighted and applauded the Congress. The followers of S. C. Bose, the Axis agent, found favorable ground for extending their penetration, which the Congress noted with alarm ("this frustration has resulted in a rapid and widespread increase of ill-will against Britain, and a growing satisfaction at the success of Japanese arms; the Working Committee view this development with grave apprehension"—Congress Working Committee resolution of July 14).

Unscrupulous reactionary propaganda in British official circles also utilized the new opportunity to blacken the Congress. In place of recognizing the bankruptcy of a policy which had thus driven the principal anti-fascist leaders and advocates of co-operation with the United Nations, like Nehru and Azad, into the wake of Gandhi and non-co-operation, this outcome was treated as a triumphant vindication of official policy. The opportunity was seized to parade every characteristic utterance of Gandhi, advocating pacifism and appeasement, with the widest publicity throughout India and the world, in order to brand the whole national movement as capitulationist and ready to make peace with Japan. The bombshell publication of documents seized in a police raid in order to expose facts already well known from Gandhi's public articles illustrated this technique of preparation for future conflict.

Undoubtedly the resumption of leadership by Gandhi as "Generalissimo" of the Congress (the title accorded him) was a heavy liability for the Indian national movement, and has done grave harm in the eyes of world opinion, which inevitably confuses the pacifist and appeasement views of Gandhi with the viewpoint of Indian Nationalism. But it is fair to recognize that the personal viewpoint of Gandhi in respect of non-violence and appeasement has been explicitly repudiated by every official Congress statement and resolution.

The Congress resolution on non-co-operation was put out in

July and finally adopted in an amended form on August 8 (against an opposition vote of 13, led by the Indian Communist Party, whose restoration of legal rights on July 22 was a sign of its growing influence and strength).

This resolution reaffirmed sympathy for the United Nations and the demand for recognition of India as a free ally under a National Government for armed resistance to fascism in co-operation with the United Nations:

"An immediate ending of British rule in India is an urgent necessity both for the sake of India and the success of the cause of the United Nations. . . .

"On the declaration of India's independence a Provisional Government will be formed, and Free India will become the ally of the United Nations, sharing with them in the trials and tribulations of the joint enterprise and struggle for freedom.

"A Provisional Government can only be formed by the co-operation of the principal parties and groups in the country. . . . Its primary function must be to defend India and resist aggression with all the armed, as well as the non-violent, forces at its command, together with the Allied Powers. . . .

"Future relations between India and the Allied Nations will be adjusted by representatives of all these free countries conferring together for their mutual advantage and for their co-operation in the common task of resisting aggression. . . .

"The Committee is anxious not to embarrass in any way the defense of China or Russia, whose freedom is precious and must be preserved, or to jeopardize the defensive capacity of the United Nations."

So far the resolution is one that would enjoy the support of the wide body of democratic and anti-fascist opinion throughout the world. But the concluding section laid down the program of non-co-operation in the event of refusal of the national demand:

"The All-India Congress Committee would yet again, at this last moment, in the interests of world freedom, renew this appeal to Britain and the United Nations.

"But the Committee feels that it is no longer justified

in holding the nation back from endeavoring to assert its will against the imperialist and authoritarian government which dominates it and prevents it from functioning in its own interests and in the interests of humanity.

"The Committee resolves, therefore, to sanction, for the vindication of India's inalienable right to freedom and independence, the starting of a mass struggle on non-violent lines on the widest possible scale so that the country may utilize all the non-violent strength it has gathered during the last 22 years of peaceful struggle.

"Such a struggle must inevitably be under the leadership of Gandhi, and the Committee requests him to take the lead and guide the nation in the steps to be taken."

Reaction above had thus produced reaction below. To the fatal policy of the British Government was now added the fatal policy of the Congress, both leading to division in the face of the common enemy.

What impelled the leaders of Indian Nationalism to adopt this catastrophic policy of non-co-operation at the very moment of the greatest crisis of the world war, with impending Japanese attack on India? It was no reckless spirit of defiance, narrow nationalism or indifference to consequences that urged such outstanding internationalists, anti-fascists and sincere patriots as Nehru and other leaders to this course. They felt driven to it, against their own wishes, because every effort to win co-operation on a free basis had failed, and they could see no alternative policy remaining to mobilize the Indian people and ensure the effective defense of India in the urgent war crisis.

The anti-fascist working-class sections of the national movement represented by the Indian Communist Party had from the outset put forward a clear and consistent line in relation to the war of liberation through a positive response to the tasks and responsibilities raised by the war. They showed concretely how such a positive response was possible and essential, despite the resistance of British reaction to Indian popular initiative or the national demand. On this basis they set out their positive alternative program to non-co-operation in the existing critical situation:

1. To build up the united National Front in India, including the unity of the Congress, the Moslem League and all other

political sections, on a common platform of resistance to fascism;

2. On the basis of such a National Front to press the demand for a settlement and for a National Government, with the united support of all sections;

3. While pressing the just political demand, to co-operate wholeheartedly in the war effort and the mobilization of the people, and to initiate unofficial measures of popular mobilization under the leadership of the national movement in order to strengthen the war effort and capacity of national resistance to fascism;

4. Resolute rejection of all policies of non-co-operation as fatal to the interests of the Indian people.

But with the existing embitterment of national feeling, and the reactionary refusal by British ruling circles of the demand for a National Government, this policy was not yet able to win the support of the bulk of the national movement.

The majority leaders of Indian Nationalism hoped by a short, sharp struggle (Vallabhai Patel, Gandhi's principal lieutenant, spoke of victory in a week, though Gandhi declared on this that "if it ends in a week, it would be a miracle") to establish Indian national freedom in time to be in an enormously stronger position to resist Japanese aggression and act as an effective ally of the United Nations. Such success would, they were confident, justify their tactics as the best defense of India and the best contribution to world victory over fascism. The suicidal blindness of this calculation is manifest. The apostles of non-violence, who for twenty-two years had failed to shake the citadel of British power by their methods, expected now by a similar campaign to secure a transference of power within a few weeks in time to meet the Japanese invader at the gates. Alternately, if they hoped to see their campaign develop to a violent mass revolt, they only revealed how lightly a movement trained to non-violence estimated the prospects of a revolutionary struggle for power by an unarmed population in the midst of war, with the invading armies on the frontiers. They ignored the plain overshadowing menace that their campaign would lead, not to the victory of Indian freedom, but to internal conflict, chaos and paralysis, opening the way to the victory of fascism in India. Their policy, as the Indian Communist Party bluntly declared, was equivalent to "cutting our

own throats. It weakens the defense of the country against aggressors and makes the task of the fascist invader easier."

The policy of non-co-operation was a policy of desperation. But the leaders who adopted it were in fact striving to reach a basis of co-operation; they made openly plain that they hoped never to launch their campaign, and sought to reach a settlement first. However much we must condemn the policy which could propose a campaign of non-co-operation in such a situation, the heaviest burden of responsibility must rest on that reactionary policy which, by refusing India's just demands, and throttling the eager desire to co-operate upon equal terms, provoked this desperate outcome.

To the last the Congress showed every desire to reach a settlement and to negotiate. The resolution was revised to stress the desire for a practical settlement and for co-operation in armed resistance to fascism. The final speeches of Gandhi and Nehru stressed the desire to negotiate. Nehru stated in his final reply to the debate: "The resolution is not a threat; it is an invitation and an explanation; it is an offer of co-operation." Gandhi's subsequently published letter to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek in July made clear that he "will take no hasty action, and whatever action is taken will be governed by the consideration that it should not injure China or encourage Japanese aggression in India or China: I am straining every nerve to avoid a conflict with British authority." It was explained that the first step would be a letter to the Viceroy proposing negotiations before there would be any question of launching any action.

The letter was begun immediately after the close of the Congress Committee, but was not at the time allowed to be finished. Within a few hours the wholesale arrests followed which opened the present conflict.

The Congress resolution was adopted on August 8. On the morning of August 9, all the principal Congress leaders were arrested (148 in Bombay), including Gandhi, Nehru, Azad, Patel, Kripalani, Rajendra Prasad and others, and the Congress was declared an illegal organization. The arrests were followed by conflict and disorders in a number of centers, which were met by police and military action, resulting in a considerable number of killed and wounded.

The arrests precipitated the open conflict and disorders, and

in this way fulfilled the role of a direct provocation, almost as if to prevent the offered negotiations.

It is difficult to see how this deliberate decision for a policy of repression in preference to negotiations can be regarded as justified by the situation. Once the disorders began, it was inevitable that the Government should take action against them. But it was the arrests which provoked the disorders, not the disorders which provoked the arrests.

At the moment of the arrests, at the close of the Congress Committee session, there was no such immediate urgency to justify the argument of the supposed imperative necessity to precipitate the conflict. No order for civil disobedience had been given. There were obviously no plans of action ready. The aim of the Congress was manifestly to negotiate. The disorders which were provoked by the arrests were disowned by the Congress and condemned by the Congress press.

It is not easy to escape the impression that the precipitation of the conflict in this way was dictated by reactionary interests in ruling circles which were more concerned to utilize a favorable tactical opportunity for crushing the Congress and the popular movements in India than in winning Indian co-operation against Japan.

Since the opening of the conflict on August 9, the veil of censorship has heavily covered the extent of the crisis and disorders which have developed in India. According to the preliminary report of the Government to the Legislative Assembly on September 14, police firing resulted in 340 killed and 850 wounded; in clashes with troops 318 were killed and 153 wounded; 31 police, 11 troops and 7 civilian officials were killed; 550 post offices were attacked, 53 being burned; 250 railway stations were attacked, and there were 24 derailments; strikes of varying extent developed in a number of centers (the principal being Ahmedabad, Gandhi's center), though not taking on the character of a general movement among the industrial workers; the principal disturbances were in United Provinces and Bihar (centers of agrarian unrest); "for a considerable period Bengal was almost completely cut off from Northern India."

Despite a number of moves promoted by wide sections of Indian opinion, as well as outside India, with a view to furthering negotiations and a settlement, the Prime Minister's speech to

Parliament on September 10 closed the door on these attempts, and emphatically re-affirmed the Government's policy in a form which could not but increase the hostility of Indian national feeling and thus provoke the further development of the conflict.

Such was the grave situation in India when the ending of the monsoon period brought close the menace of attack of the Japanese armies on the frontiers.

XVI. What Must Be Done

"The interests of Indian democracy do not conflict with the interests of British democracy or of world democracy."—Indian National Congress, Resolution of September 15, 1939.

I. THE BASIS OF NEGOTIATIONS

Can a solution be found for the present dangerous situation in India?

Despite the extreme stage of crisis, deadlock and conflict which has been reached, and the narrow margin of time within which further steps may be attempted, there is every reason to say that a solution can be achieved, and rapidly achieved, given the will to overcome the difficulties and face the necessary conditions of a new policy. The very extremity of the danger should hasten the solution. But there is no time to lose.

We cannot afford to continue this suicidal conflict between two freedom-loving nations, with fascism battering at the doors of both. Although General Wavell, in his broadcast at the end of September, 1942, has discounted the likelihood of any imminent Japanese attempt at invasion, it is obvious that no responsible policy, whether of the Indian national movement or of the British Government, can base its calculations on the assumption of ignoring this menace. The urgent necessity of a settlement, before still more disastrous consequences follow, is recognized by all serious opinion. What must be done?

Events in India, as in the whole world situation, are moving