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# INDIA: OUTLOOK FOR FREEDOM

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**W**HAT is the outlook for India in 1947? During 1946 the crisis deepened. The year opened with a universal national upsurge for freedom, uniting Hindus and Moslems, Congress Party and Moslem League followers in gigantic common demonstrations against imperialism, and culminating in the naval rising in Bombay last February. Then came the maneuvers of the British Cabinet Mission. The closing months have seen murderous communal conflicts, divided leadership, disorganization and frustration of the political movement and the fiasco of the London Conference. Meanwhile the driving forces of the crisis—the desperate economic situation, the misery and militancy of the

**An examination of the plan to grant "freedom" without shaking imperialist rule.**

**By R. PALME DUTT**

masses, the agrarian unrest, the universal demand for the end of imperialist rule—continue to operate. The situation in India for 1947 is packed with dynamite.

The fiasco of the London Conference of the British government and Indian political leaders has demonstrated anew the failure of the Cabinet Mission's plan to bring a solution.

Every Communist prediction and warning with regard to the character of that plan and its outcome has been justified by events.

In June, 1946, on the occasion of the departure of the Cabinet Mission, I wrote in the *London Daily Worker*: "The situation in India is dangerous and unstable and full of latent conflict. No basic problem has been solved. . . . Continued unsolved deadlocks [are] inherent in every stage of the plan. Experienced observers fear a grave intensification of communal antagonism as a result of the Mission's work. The general situation in India grows daily more menacing."

On the other hand, even as late as October the government's apologists

were celebrating the plan as a triumphant realization of Indian freedom: "In India today one of the greatest advances in human history is taking place. Britain, which today wields power over 400,000,000 souls, is transferring control voluntarily and peacefully to an Indian democracy." (London *Daily Herald* editorial, Oct. 12, 1946.) "The Labor government in its Indian policy has undertaken the boldest renunciation of imperialism which history records." (Michael Foot in the *Daily Herald*, Oct. 15, 1946.)

Any impartial observer can today judge which description is closer to the realities of the present Indian situation.

The essence of the Indian problem today needs to be clearly seen behind the maze of constitutional subtleties, legal interpretations and endlessly protracted sectional negotiations.

Imperialism can no longer continue to rule India in the old way. The war not only brought extreme disorganization, but also shattered the prestige of British power. The world advance of liberation after victory over fascism kindled an unquenchable flame of revolt in India. Whereas the sporadic disturbances of 1942 were "suppressed with remarkable ease" (Churchill), and were followed by years of black repression and political inaction, the mass national revolt which swept through India at the close of the war and extended to the armed forces could no longer be handled in this way. Hence the Cabinet Mission was sent to India to prepare a new constitutional plan.

The dispatch of the Cabinet Mission did not represent a new decision of imperialism to grant freedom to India. In fact, the Labor government's Indian policy has revealed the same continuity with the preceding Tory policy as in other fields of world policy. Even the 1946 plan repeats the essential lines of the 1942 Tory offer. The first declaration of the Labor government with regard to India in October, 1945, was only to propose, following the elections due to be held under the existing constitution, conversations of the Viceroy with Indian leaders on the future Constituent Assembly, as already laid down in the Amery-Cripps Plan. As the situation became worse, the parliamentary delegation was sent, but won no response.

The announcement of the decision to send the Cabinet Mission followed the naval rising. It was an emergency measure to meet an emergency situa-

tion. In the words of the European leader in the Central Assembly in New Delhi: "India was on the verge of a revolution before the Cabinet Mission arrived. The Cabinet Mission has at least postponed, if not eliminated, the danger." (P. J. Griffiths, leader of the European Group in the Central Legislative Assembly, speech to the East India Association in London, June 24, 1946.)

**T**HE tactics of imperialism in the face of mass national revolt are familiar. These are to seek to disrupt the national movement under cover of formal concessions to win over a section of the leadership, while leaving the essence of imperialist power intact. These tactics are illustrated in India today.

In the modern period these concessions have sometimes included formal recognition of "independence." The new imperialist technique of sham "independence" was first illustrated in Egypt. In face of the mass national revolt in Egypt at the close of the First World War, Egypt was proclaimed "independent" in 1922, and King Fuad was installed under British military protection and martial law. Military occupation continued, and certain key issues were left for future negotiation. Today, twenty-four years later, military occupation has not yet ended, and a new treaty is being imposed which even the majority of the hand-picked Egyptian delegation rejected. The same technique of "independence" was later applied to Iraq, and more recently to Transjordan. The same method has been followed by the United States in the Philippines.

The governing characteristics of this new imperialist technique of "independence" are that (1) military control is maintained either by direct military occupation or by treaty rights and holding of bases; (2) economic control is maintained by protection of the holdings and interests of the big monopoly concerns of the imperialist power; (3) a constitution is devised to place administration in the hands of sections cooperating with the imperialist power, which holds an overriding position to intervene in case of necessity. This technique is illustrated in the Indian Plan today.

A study of economic and military realities in India reveals the determination of imperialism to maintain its hold. Economically, Britain is not quitting India. British capital assets in India

have recently been estimated by the Economic Adviser of the Federal Reserve Bank, Shenoy, at £2,200,000,000 (an exaggerated estimate). The biggest British monopolies are linking up with Indian monopoly concerns to form joint Indo-British corporations.

In the military sphere the British hold is being strengthened. Alongside the British military forces, the Indian Army, nearly half a million strong, is being maintained under British officers, and Indianization is resisted. The Princes' States military forces are being built up to increased strength under British control.

Alongside the moves to build a Middle Eastern anti-Soviet bloc, India represents the key base in Southern Asia for the reactionary anti-Soviet plans of the Anglo-American alliance. A host of evidence could be brought to show the very active preparations that are going forward. This objective colors the whole character of the present negotiations.

These economic and strategic aims of imperialism in India require a corresponding social and political basis in order to circumvent the overwhelming national demand for real independence. Hitherto the main social and political basis of British power in India has rested on the Princes and feudal elements—the big landlord class created by British administration to constitute the loyal buttress of its power. This basis is now too narrow in the face of the rising mass revolt. Hence the effort is made to draw in the rising bourgeoisie, in association with the Princes and feudal elements, to cooperate with imperialism against the Indian masses.

**T**O FULFILL these aims, imperialism seeks the points of division within the national movement. Two main lines of division exist.

First, there is the division between the upper-class leadership and the masses. Class differentiation has been intensified in India by the war. The tiny capitalist class made gigantic profits, while the masses were impoverished. The capitalists seek new outlets and expansion for their capital, and press against the restrictions of imperialism. But they are conscious of their economic weakness, and they fear the masses. The upper-class leadership of both the Congress Party and the Moslem League condemned the naval rising, and prohibited the mighty demonstrations which drew out in its sup-

port the whole population of Bombay and other great cities. In panic fear of a mass revolt, they were ready to welcome the Cabinet Mission and seek the path of cooperation with imperialism. But contradictions still remain which may upset the cooperation.

Second, there is the division between the Congress and the Moslem League. This division has been fostered by imperialist policy for the past forty years. The Moslem League was founded under British inspiration to spike the Congress. Today the Moslem League has decisive mass support among the Moslems. Behind this may be traced social and economic grounds, including the conflict of rival exploiting groups, utilizing religious slogans. The mass support in Moslem majority areas for the demand of "Pakistan," or a separate Moslem State in Northwest and Northeast India, reflects in a distorted form the growth of new forms of national consciousness within India;

and the Communist Party of India has shown the democratic solution of this problem through the principle of national self-determination.

The Cabinet Mission's plan is based on these divisions. It seeks to balance and counterpoise the Congress, the League and the Princes in a complicated structure in such a way that ultimate control rests in fact with the British rulers. This balancing method characterizes equally the composition and procedure of the Constituent Assembly and the interim government.

The so-called Indian interim government is not a government with power. It is still the Viceroy's Executive Council, and the Viceroy retains supreme power. The Viceroy retains in his sole control the Political Department, dealing with the Princes. He also retains in his sole control all dealings with the provinces. There is not much left for this "interim government," which could at best only serve

as a means of mobilization of the struggle for freedom.

The Constituent Assembly, in addition to its undemocratic character and weightage by the Princes, is hamstrung by the fixed imposed division between Hindus and Moslems with a right of mutual veto.

The plan for a constitution proposed a weak center (with no social and economic powers) and compulsory provincial groupings in Northwest and Northeast India to establish separate constitutions. The Moslem League jumped at this plan on the grounds that the compulsory provincial grouping provided the "essence of Pakistan" and the center would be ineffective. But the Congress also accepted the plan on the grounds that the center could be strengthened, while the provincial groupings could be treated as optional and rendered ineffective by the refusal of the Congress-majority provinces to participate. Thus the supposed compromise only provided a new bone of contention. The joint acceptance of the plan concealed continuing conflict, as the London Conference revealed.

From this have followed the chronic crises and deadlocks inherent in the plan. The key to all the complex moves and negotiations which have followed the Cabinet Mission's departure is at bottom simple. The British authorities' aim is to keep both the Congress and the League in play so that they shall balance one another and leave overriding power in the hands of imperialism. The aim of the Congress and the League is to work the plan in such a way as to gain their separate objectives by winning the support of the British against the other. The net effect serves the tactics of imperialism and defeats the aims of both the Congress and the League, which have walked into the trap of the British Mission's plan instead of combining against imperialism.

The successive moves illustrate this general formula:

*Phase 1.* The Congress rejects the proposal for the interim government. The League at once accepts, hoping to secure the interim government in isolation.

*Phase 2.* The Viceroy is unwilling to give the government to the League in isolation and face the Congress opposition. The League withdraws its acceptance of the plan and calls for "direct action."

*Phase 3.* As soon as the League has moved to opposition, the Congress an-



nounces acceptance of the plan, and secures the interim government.

*Phase 4.* The Viceroy, unwilling to risk the interim government in sole Congress hands, brings in the League, even though there is no agreement between the Congress and League and the joint ministers are at open war with each other.

*Phase 5.* The Congress announces its intention to go forward with the Constituent Assembly, in which it counts on rendering the provincial grouping ineffective and using its majority to establish a democratic federal republic. The League announces refusal to participate.

*Phase 6.* The British government intervenes again, this time from London, to bring the League into the Assembly, and thus restore the balance, and if this fails, threatens to refuse to recognize the results of the Assembly.

Especially significant is the final passage of the British government's statement of December 6: "Should a constitution come to be framed by a Constituent Assembly in which a large section of the Indian population had not been represented, His Majesty's Government could not of course contemplate forcing such a constitution upon any unwilling part of the country."

Thus the veto is placed in the hands of the Moslem League, and the final arbitrament rests with the British government. Such is the ignominious epitaph within six months of the supposed offer for Indians freely to choose their own form of government.

**W**HAT follows? Either the Congress submits, and the Constituent Assembly is paralyzed by the mutual veto of Congress and League, resulting in a constitution of impotence in accordance with the requirements of the plan; or the Congress endeavors to use its majority to frame a constitution according to its wishes, and the British government refuses to ratify the constitution—with the Congress possibly once again passing to opposition and even resumption of struggle.

In the final analysis British semi-official expression, as in recent London *Times* editorials, threatens to impose partition—the "solution" adopted in Ireland and proposed in Palestine. Hard experience is thus teaching Indian opinion the futility of the path of surrender and compromise which has been followed during the past nine months. The proceedings of the

Meerut session of the National Congress have revealed the growing concern and disquiet.

The crisis in India continues. The communal conflicts are a symptom of the desperation and frustration of the masses, of the lack of united leadership; they are the evil fruits of the poisonous tree of communal politics, originally implanted and fostered by imperialist policy and accentuated by the Cabinet Mission's proceedings. The cure lies in united national struggle. As speaker after speaker at the Meerut Congress pointed out, there were no communal conflicts in India during the great united national struggles of the beginning of 1946 before the Mission came.

Despite the confusions and sectional divisions of the top leadership, the mass struggle in India is going forward and growing. This is shown in the advance of the strike movement to record heights (already 7,500,000 working days in the first seven months of 1946); the peasant unrest and the freedom battles against the Princes in a number of states, notably Kashmir and Travancore. The imperative need now for victory of Indian freedom is to forge anew the unity of the national independence movement from top to bottom, to end the path of surrender to imperialist maneuvers and to build a joint Congress-League-Communist front on the basis of rejection of the plan and the fight for full independence with recognition of the right of national self-determination within India. Only on this basis can Indian freedom be won. It is for these aims that the Communist Party of India is fighting.

The need is to support this fight, and to demand the replacement of the present plan by the unqualified recognition of Indian independence. The concrete test of such independence is the withdrawal of troops and the handing over of full powers to Indian leaders—either to a united national front, if such is formed, or, failing that, to the present Constituent Assembly as a sovereign body until such time as the Indians themselves call a real democratic Constituent Assembly based on adult suffrage. The present Indian situation is not an easy one and does not admit of easy solutions. But the urgent need of the crisis in India calls for such a plain democratic policy on the part of the Labor movement in place of maneuvers which only perpetuate Indian divisions and Indian subjection.

## portside patter

By **BILL RICHARDS**

Bevin declares that Britain has "a mind and purpose of her own." He wants it made clear that Great Britain can blunder about without any help from our State Department.

*The NAM is expected to launch an assault on the Wagner Act, the Norris-LaGuardia Act, and the Wages and Hours Law. In keeping with NAM's new "liberal" policy the Bill of Rights may be spared.*

The president of the General Electric Company advocates freezing wages to avoid inflation. Corporate profits, on the other hand, are going high enough to freeze by themselves.

*Princess Elizabeth and Prince Philip of Greece are said to be very much in love. They say he'd go to Hellenes and back for her.*

The House Committee on Un-American Activities is going to ask for increased appropriations. The committee is the last thing Rankin can afford to find in the red.

*Ex-Governor Stassen of Minnesota has at least thrown his hat into the ring. Dewey and Taft are still talking through theirs.*

There can be no doubt that Harry Truman's popularity has increased to the point where he must be considered for 1948. The fact that he is an amiable, likeable chap immeasurably strengthens his chances in forthcoming elections.

He is fond of children, fishing and playing the piano, qualities that cannot be overlooked as vote-getting potentialities. His obvious discomfort in the national limelight lends credulity to the belief that he seeks no personal gain from his political endeavors.

His simplicity and honesty alone should bring him to the forefront when party leaders meet. It is safe to say that Harry S. Truman's name will lead all the rest when candidates are nominated for mayor of Independence, Missouri.