

IN THE COLONIES

The Indian Nationalist Press and the Anglo-Soviet Rupture.

By Luhan i.

The raid on Arcos was given great publicity in the Indian newspapers. Though the Indian press receives its European news through the British Official Agency, Reuter, the majority of the Nationalist newspapers gave greater prominence to the Soviet point of view — as put forward in the statements of Rosengoltz — than to the British official versions.

The entire Nationalist press condemned the rupture as not being justified and as leading to a deliberate disturbance, on the part of Great Britain, of the peace of the world. The Right Nationalist papers, however, made their comments in a subdued tone, restricting themselves to an appreciation of the consequences of the Anglo-Soviet rupture in the domestic affairs of England and in the European arena. The official press of the Indian National Congress, more particularly the press representing the Congress Left wing, condemned the rupture in energetic language and sought to bring out the Asiatic implications of Anglo-Soviet political relations before and after the rupture.

“Forward”, the official organ of the Indian National Congress, writes:

“The real quarrel between the British Government and the Soviet Republic lies in the serious conflict of their respective political, economic and social ideals. Britain is a capitalist State while the Soviet stands for Communism. . . . The Soviet Government have destroyed the ramifications of the feudal lords and capitalists (in Russia) thus rousing the bitter hatred of the leading capitalist State in the world. This does not exhaust the *casus belli*. What seems to have frightened the British foreign office all the more is the Asiatic policy of the Soviet Government. The proximity of the Russian territory to the Indian frontier makes the Bolshevik Republic particularly hateful to the British imperialists.”

Concluding the article, "Forward" says:

"The systematic propaganda that has been going on for some time past to make Russia appear as a serious menace to the British Empire in India will easily lead the public to believe that Indian men and money will be utilised for teaching a lesson to Bolshevik Russia for her atrocious crime of initiating some of the coloured races of Asia into the secrets of self-determination.... How very 'annoying' this must be to our rulers?"

After the actual rupture had taken place, "Forward" says:

"The expected has come to pass. The two antagonistic forces, created by clash of ideals of the British Empire and the Union of Soviet Republics, have become into severe collision, leading to the derangement of the political equilibrium of Europe and Asia.... Whether common hatred of Bolshevik Russia or the 'diabolical suspicion' of each other (among the Locarno Powers) which has always led to the reshuffling of political groups in Europe will assert itself, it is difficult to predict. Indications, however, are not wanting to show that the Soviet Republic is not to be despised with impunity and the British imperialists may regret the day when the rupture of diplomatic relations with the Union of Soviet Republics was officially announced".

Discussing the motives of the Conservative Government, "Forward" says:

"Their decision was possibly influenced more by consideration of the geographic position of Soviet Union than by the merits of the Communist doctrine. Obviously Russia is believed to be a serious factor to be reckoned with in the new orientation of British policy in the near and far East... Russia rubs shoulders almost with India. Can the British imperialists contemplate the situation with equanimity?"

The following conclusion of the present article of "Forward" is a more or less approximate interpretation of opinion in the Congress rank and file:

"The proximity of the Soviet Republic to India and the possibility of extension of Russian influence over Persia and Afghanistan in the Near East as well as over China in the Far East, are believed to be a far greater menace to British interests than the immediate loss of Russian markets for British capitalists. It is doubtful, however, if the rupture of diplomatic relations will materially minimize the danger. It may give a greater impetus to the new orientation of the Asiatic policy of the Soviet Government. If Russia succeeds in extricating China from the tentacles of foreign domination, they will possibly join hands and will become a tremendous force against imperialist exploitation and aggression. The oppressed nations are out for liberty, a new world is fermenting underneath. Russia has given a new note to that music."

"The Indian National Herald" (Congress Left Wing), while not referring to the strictly Asiatic aspect of the Anglo-Russian rupture discussed the rupture in its relation to diplomatic usage and the internal political situation in England. It concludes by saying:

"There is only one word to describe Mr. Baldwin's laboured justification of an extreme step of an absolutely novel character in the diplomatic relationships of civilised powers and that is bunkum. The crux of the matter is the help that the Russian workers unstintingly give to their British comrades who were fighting last year in a righteous cause.... The Trade Union Bill and the break with Russia are complementary of each other, calculated to produce the same results, namely to cripple the British workers by depriving them of the active sympathy and support of the only emancipated body of workers in the world. It is a dishonest manoeuvre on the face of it and the wanton outrage on the Soviet Embassy carried out by the British government both in London and Peking is aggravated by the blackest intentions that have impelled the Baldwin Government to embark on a ruthless policy of repression at home and gratuitous provocation abroad."

Writing on 28. 5. 27 the "Indian National Herald" maintained that the rupture was meant to lead to war. It said:

"The next phase must be a deadly duel between imperialism and bolshevism and another world war.... Britain's break with Russia is not an isolated event; it is a link in the formidable chain which is being forged by imperialist powers — Britain, France, Italy, America and Japan — for the political, economic and moral enslavement of the world. Bolshevism is the menace to the ascendancy of imperialism over the wide world. So Bolshevism must be crushed.... the attitude of the Imperialist Government of England brings out one thing in particular, and that is the burning desire for a decisive encounter with Bolshevism which should decide whether Imperialism or Socialism shall rule the world of the future."

Thus the conspiracy of the British government against the Soviet Union has met with a response in **India** which is causing great anxiety to the imperialist government in London. Moreover, the attitude of **Indian** troops in **China** is by no means calculated to reassure British imperialism regarding the future development in India itself. In fact the British government was compelled to withdraw an Indian battalion from Shanghai in order to preserve it from revolutionary "contamination".