

A British Voice on the Report of the Simon Commission.

By R. Page Arnot (London).

When the Tsarist armies, flogging, burning and slaying, advanced through Poland in August 1914, a proclamation was issued "promising" self-governing institutions and freedom to the peoples of Poland. In June 1930 while the British armed forces are burning, slaying and flogging in India, British Imperialism, through the Simon Report, renews its "promise" of "self-governing institutions", of the "realisation of responsible government in India".

Once before, in the critical revolutionary year, 1917, British Imperialism, faced with tremendous difficulties, made a "promise" to the Indian peoples. But the promise, when set forth in the **Montagu-Chelmsford "Reforms"**, was seen to be only a judicious arrangement for what was called "devolution" and "dyarchy". Devolution merely meant the handing over of some of the work of the Viceroy to nine subordinate Governors of Provinces, such as Bengal, Burma, the Punjab, etc.

Dyarchy meant that in these provinces (but not in the Central Government) a few of the least important subjects should be transferred to Indian Ministers, while the more important subjects were reserved for autocratic rule.

But neither the Ministers nor the legislative councils from which they were to be drawn possessed even the shadow of power. The purse-strings were held by the Governors. The farcical Indian Legislative Assembly was to be elected by 2.8 per cent of the population. The workers and peasants were left out of account.

So empty were these "Reforms" that the Imperialists turned to the manoeuvre of a promise within a promise. The **Government of India Act of 1919** promised that in ten years there would be another promise, and that His Majesty the King-Emperor would appoint a commission to enquire into the matter and to see if something could be done for "the poor Indians". Now the ten years are up. And accordingly, this Statutory Commission has duly submitted its report. The "promise" is renewed.

The purpose of the Simon Commission is therefore clear. It is simply a cunning manoeuvre, designed to fetter the Indian colony closer to British Imperialism.

No pains were spared to make the manoeuvre successful. The Commission of seven "English Gentlemen" was chosen in 1927 from all three capitalist parties. Lord Birkenhead was

able to announce that Ramsay MacDonald had privately agreed with the Tories. The Labour Party whip made it a test question that no one should vote against the Simon Commission—and no one did. The "Lefts" (Maxton, Wilkinson, and Co.) obeyed the whip. The Chairman chosen was the Liberal **Sir John Simon**, the most smooth-tongued and most highly-feid lawyer in Parliament. Everything was done to present a united front of the Imperialist parties.

India, like foreign policy, and now like unemployment, was declared to be "above party", that is, all three capitalist parties were equally concerned in the imperialist swindle.

But in India the case was different. From the moment the Commission landed in Bombay—where it was met by vast demonstrations shouting "Simon, Go Back!"—until it finally left India there was no town it visited without being met by hostile crowds. The name of Simon, like the name of MacDonald, is now hated by the masses of India as personifying the greed and ferocious tyranny of the Imperialist bourgeoisie.

The hostile reception of the Simon Commission in India did not and could not alter the colonial policy of the British bourgeoisie. But it led to the preparation of reserve manoeuvres in support of the Simon Commission manoeuvre. Yet another deceitful promise, of "Dominion Status" this time was announced by the Viceroy of India on 31st of October last; while promises were thrown out of a Round Table Conference, where everything, if need be, could go into the melting pot of discussion.

Meantime the preparation of the Simon Commission's report went forward: and on the 10th. of June, the first part of it, the survey, was published amid the immense applause of the capitalist newspapers.

What is the purpose of this survey? It is a skilful piece of imperialist propaganda, prior to the publication of the Commission's recommendations. It is the preliminary barrage of lies and deception, to cover up the infamy of the colonial regime of exploitation and robbery, and to distract attention from the realities of the Indian situation. The reality is the Indian Revolution and the remorseless attempt of the Labour Government to crush the revolutionary masses by fire and slaughter, by martial law and flogging, by machine-guns and bombing aeroplanes.

Accordingly, the Survey repeats all the familiar falsehoods of imperialist propaganda. India is presented as a country without class struggle, as a sub-continent of ignorant peoples whose religious frenzies would hurl them at one another's throats were it not for the strong restraining hand of British imperialism, were it not for the blameless British officials, uncomplainingly carrying the "white man's burden".

A cunning picture is drawn by Simon (skilled in the art of bull-dozening a jury) of British capitalism as the civiliser of India. Not only is the whole picture as false as hell, but almost every page contains miststatements or distorted presentations of the facts.

The infamous massacre at Amritsar in 1919 is referred to in such a way as to suggest that the masses and not the bestial ferocity of the British Imperialist officers, were responsible. Here is the passage:

"... the movement developed in March 1919 into a widespread outburst of mob violence, principally in the Punjab and Gujarat, and culminated in the tragedy of Jalianwala Bagh in Amritsar."

On one page the report carefully enumerates the score of policemen killed by the masses of peasantry and their attack on the police station of Chawri-Chaura in 1921; refers to the Moplah rebellion of the same year as "outrage and arson"; and carefully omits all reference to the British atrocity of the Death Train when a hundred Moplah prisoners were done away with under circumstances far worse than the fabulous "Black Hole of Calcutta".

At times the lying is barefaced; as when the Survey accounts for the fact that not a single Indian soldier is recruited from the fifty millions of Bengal and Assan (it is because they dare not) by the statement that they are not a martial race.

But the significance of the Survey is not so much in that it is compact of falsehood, as in its foreshadowing of recommendations to be published in ten days time and consequently in its indications of the direction of imperialist policy.

There are two matters stressed in this survey: the so-called Indianisation of the army and the position of the Indian princes. As plain as can be, the Survey tells the Indian peoples that while they may be allowed a toy army with Indian officers, the British army will remain in India because "extreme defence" is to be considered as "affecting the integrity of the whole Empire and as bound up with general imperial policy".

It could not be put more clearly. British imperialism will not release its grip.

But more important still is the reference to the Indian princes, whose domains cover one-third of India, and whose feudal interests are bound up with the maintenance of imperialist rule. Hitherto, these despotic monarchies, rotten to the core, have been in the background. Now British Imperialism is moving towards an assertion of its reliance upon the most reactionary forces, the princes, landlords and money-lenders.

This is clear from the Survey: and is even more clear from the fact that the Indian princes are asked to take part in the Round Table Conference, dated for October 20th.

But before October 20th much will happen. The revolution developing in India is hidden from us by the strict censorship. But we know that the masses are fighting on unbroken; that martial law (shewing the desperate need of the British) still reigns in Sholapur; that on the North West frontier all the devastating bombs of the Air Forces have not yet defeated the reinforcements from the hills. Against all the atrocities of the Labour Government, the shootings and floggings, the fight of the masses goes on.

But the fight is our fight. And now is the moment for the British workers to form Hands Off India Committees in the workshops, to expose the lies of the Simon Report and together with the workers in all imperialist countries to demonstrate their solidarity and join with the workers and peasants of India in the struggle for overthrow of British imperialism.