He met Gandhi, Nehru, Jinnah, Joshi, Cripps. He saw appalling mass-poverty alongside great individual wealth. He saw the problems, met the people who, with their fighting spirit, courage and ability—will build a free and prosperous India.

Souvenir of his travels

one shilling
Introduction

FOR the first time since 1921, R. Palme Dutt was allowed by the Government to visit India.

He went to India as a Special Correspondent of the Daily Worker. His aim was to see first hand the conditions of the people; to get a more personal knowledge of the problems facing them and us. And to meet and discuss these problems with the leading people of Indian political life.

THOSE things he accomplished. That his four months in India were packed with experiences, is clear from this glimpse of one of the programmes for a week, arranged for him by the Communist Party of India. A twenty-page folder, with every minute provided for. Breakfast timed. Cars arranged. Straight from breakfast to meeting. Then to another meeting. Then to tour a slum area and speak with the people. Break for lunch. Then to interview a leading personality. Then to another meeting. And so on throughout the day, until one reads, “11 p.m. Retire to bed.” A schedule like this every day. Not a minute wasted.

THEN his itinerary. Landing on March 29 at Karachi Aerodrome, he went to 18 of the major towns and many villages before leaving on July 31.

DURING his tour he met Gandhi, Jinnah, Nehru, Cripps, and other leaders and spoke to peasants, workers, intellectuals and business men. He returned with his encyclopaedic knowledge and his grasp of India’s problems enriched by an invaluable personal experience. A glimpse of that experience is told in these pages. It should deepen our sense of responsibility to the Indian people and strengthen our determination to change British policy towards India.

LOOK at the pictures of the famine victims—knowing we cannot avoid some responsibility. Read of the people’s conditions in Bombay—and know that we have been in India for over 140 years. And then look at the other pictures—and have confidence that with, first, our departure from India, and then our assistance, the people of India have among them all the ability, courage and understanding to build their country—for themselves.

DUTT WELCOMED AT KARACHI AERODROME
Dutt addresses a "selective" meeting

R. Palme Dutt was asked to speak to a reception meeting of selected English-speaking Communists and sympathisers in Calcutta. Expecting two or three hundred, he was told there would be 5,000 present. There were 8,000 at the meeting.

P. C. Joshi, Secretary of the Indian Communist Party, with R. P. Dutt.
Impressions of Calcutta

"THE town is much shabbier than Bombay and the poverty more glaring. The rickshaws, with a weak, undersized coolie dragging two healthy, fat clients, added to the sense of repulsion. I had seen none in Delhi or Bombay. Overcrowding in Calcutta is no less marked than in Bombay; the population here has trebled during the war to 4½ millions. In the bustees, or working-class quarters, the sanitary conditions are worse than in Bombay, the close lines run with an open drain between. Taps average one to five or six hundred; in one case there were five taps for 8,000 people.

ALTHOUGH the intense political divisions have greatly weakened Bengal, the organisation of the working class and of the Communist Party is impressive. The Calcutta Party runs its own daily newspaper, which occupies the ground floor of the great block of the provincial headquarters building. When I asked the provincial secretary how many full-time workers they had for Bengal, he replied, about a thousand. For Calcutta there were seventy. I visited a unique institution, the Red Aid Hospital, splendidly run, with two full-time doctors and sixteen beds, where the victims of the election hooliganism were being cared for. He showed me with pride the microscope which had been presented by the Socialist Medical Association. This institution deserves help.

"I was able to meet many leading personalities in Calcutta and draw from them very interesting impressions of the peculiar situation in Bengal."
Famine in India

During the past four years, there have been three famines in India. The Bengal famine in 1943 killed one and a half millions of people (official estimate). Unofficial observers say three million died.

The two pictures on this page are but an indication of the terrible effects of famine. And the famines were not only due to the war and the world food shortage. The reasons are to be found basically in the economy of India, which is the result of a century and a half of British rule. For this we personally have some responsibility.

The average length of life of an Indian is under 27 years as against 56 years for an Englishman. The national income is estimated at 2d. a head per day. Wages range from 6d. a day for an unskilled woman worker (often even less for agricultural workers) to about £1 a week for the top level of skilled workers. Tiny children labour long hours for two or three pence.

There is no unemployment or health insurance. provision for old age. There is little protective industrial legislation.

Child victims of the famine. Do we not bear some responsibility for their terrible childhood?
Bombay

Reprinted from R. Palme Dutt's Travel notes published in the "Labour Monthly," July 1946

During the Easter recess, while the Cabinet Mission departed to fish for trout and shoot wild duck in the cool heights of Kashmir, I took the opportunity to visit the crowded industrial centres of Bombay. It was an inspiring experience. Here I was able to meet some of the outstanding trade union and working-class leaders of India and to visit the Communist Party Headquarters, where 120 full-time workers live, work, eat and sleep in the more than Spartan simplicity of their "Commune." On the roof of the provincial headquarters I had an unforgettable meeting of welcome with 1,500 workers crowded on every inch of space, and as large an overflow meeting outside. They gave me a wonderful display of their songs. These songs are turned out on every current topic (sure enough, as soon as I arrived a new song was composed in my honour with the chorus thundering out the unmanageable syllables of my name and somehow turning them into melody). I wish space would permit me to give the text of some of these songs, which were translated for me; they are simple, lively mass agitation, full of humour and vigour, with a catching refrain. Half the mass propaganda, Joshi told me, is done by these songs. Their effect is so powerful that when a team of seven singers visited the Central Provinces for the election campaign, the only thing the authorities could find to do to counteract this was to arrest the whole team for a dacoity (robbery with violence) committed 100 miles away.

One evening I spent in the homes of the workers at a time when they had got back from the factories. The housing conditions of Bombay have won an unenviable notoriety throughout the world. There is no improvement today. On the contrary, as the population has doubled during the war and now stands at 3½ millions, the overcrowding has grown much worse.

The chawls are lines of rudely built single-room huts set back to back in close rows. Each is about 12ft. by 10ft., with an uneven earth floor, with no window or ventilation. The darkness inside is only pierced sometimes by a guttering oil wick, while there is an oppressive heat from the tiny stoves and cooking on the ground. In each of these tiny sheds whole families live, eat, sleep, cook, and go through all the processes of life, of birth, sickness and death in these few feet of space. The occupants of the first hut I visited numbered ten; they paid Rs. 7 per month as rent for this wretched home. In the next there were no less than 13 tiny stoves or primitive means of cooking, indicating 13 households; my guide pointed out that this would mean at least 20 people living here, but the occupants feared to give the exact number lest their rent should be raised.

The first set of chawls I visited consisted of three rows of ten. For these thirty huts, representing about 300 persons, there were three taps
in all available with water only
during the morning and evening
hours coming in a slow trickle.
There were three lavatories in
all—holes in the ground directly
over the drain; one was over-
flowing and unusable. The next
set of eight chawls comprised
160 of these single-room huts.
For these 1,600 people there
were six taps in all with water
running only from 6 to 8 in the
evening and 2 to 7.30 in the
morning, although in the well-
to-do quarters of Bombay, the
water is available all day. One
solidly built small building was
set apart, brilliantly lit with elec-
tric light and well-equipped with
furniture. This was the rent-
collector’s office. Thus elec-
tricity was, in fact, laid on, but
none is available for the people.
These chawls were mostly
thirty-five years old and un-
touched since they were built.
The landlord does nothing but
take the rents. The municipal
regulations are of the most
elementary, sketchy description,
and are seldom enforced; the
inspectors, corporation and
landlords all work together; even
if there is a prosecution it only
results in nominal fines of a few
rupees. Yet in the midst of
these grim conditions, the spirit
of the workers is unbroken.

WHEN I had seen the chawls
I thought I had seen the
bottom level, but there was
worse to come. We next visited
the Matunga Labour Camp, or
sweepers’ colony beyond the out-
skirts of the city. There was
here a series of municipal huts
built for sweepers and outcasts.
Far beyond the relatively small
number of municipal huts
stretched a mass of crude huts
and tents built by the occupants
themselves on the waste ground.
These were the most ramshackle
constructions of bamboo, straw,
rags and brown paper. With the
most constricted interior space
the uneven earthen floor was
broken by holes and tunnels of
rats. The space between the huts
were barely two yards, in some
cases one yard wide. Rats and
vermin swarmed. There had
recently been three cholera
deaths here. Mosquitoes fill the
air. There was a “shop” on
the bare ground with tiny frag-
ments of rotten dry fish. At
one spot a drain had broken
open and overflowed; the spot
seethed with crawling life. There
were about a thousand huts with
an average of ten people in each;
for all these there were only
thirty-two taps, or one for 300
persons. Even the outside veran-
dahs of a few boards with a low
covering were often occupied.
In one space little more than a
kennel 4 ft. by 2 ft. I saw a
family crouched, a sick old
woman on the ground moaning
and coughing, two children
huddled beside her and an old
man behind. Yet even here in
this nightmare inferno of human
misery, where no Congress or
League representative dares
enter, the Red Flag proclaims
its hope and defiance and the
task of organisation has been
begun; there is a Party group of
25; we were given a tremendous
reception, old men and women
and tiny children raised the
clenched fist and we were shown
with pride one entire hut which
was the hut of the Friends of
the Soviet Union, with an aged
man in charge, and portraits of
Lenin and Stalin and a garland
within.

THE memory of the Matunga
labour camp will remain with
me to my dying day: and with
it, this feeling above all:
hatred of the system that has
done this to human life; and
honour for those who, living
under such conditions, have not
gone under, and have carried
forward human struggle and
comradeship and the fight for
the future.
India Demands

We in Britain have a duty. The Labour movement stands pledged to fulfil a policy undoubtedly desired by the majority of the British people—achievement of real Indian freedom.

We must demand that the Government take immediate steps to make good the shortcomings of the Cabinet Mission's plan and especially to:

(1) Issue a declaration of recognition of Indian independence as the starting point of any further negotiations.

(2) Provide for democratic election by universal suffrage of a Constituent Assembly in India, on the basis of redrawing the existing provincial boundaries on linguistic-cultural lines so as to allow for the exercise of the right of national self-determination if desired in any region.

(3) Hand over power to a provisional National Government of Indian leaders, either of the Congress and Muslim League jointly, if they reach an agreement, or in the absence of an agreement, to the major political organisation, the Congress.

Such a settlement is vital, not only for the 400 million Indian people, but also in the interests of democracy and of world peace.

P. C. Joshi, Dr. Adhikari and B. T. Ranadive of the Political Bureau of the Indian Communist Party.
the Indian Ballet. R. P. Dutt was greatly impressed.
R. PALME DUTT
Member of the Executive Committee of the Communist Party. Editor of Labour Monthly; world-renowned Marxist and authority on India.
STAND BY THE INDIAN PEOPLE

A personal message from R. P. Dutt

WHEN I left India after my four months' visit, I pledged myself to do everything in my power to bring the knowledge of the conditions I had seen in India to the British people, and to strengthen our common struggle against a common enemy.

NEVER was there a greater need for close understanding between the British and Indian people. The terrible events which have taken place in Calcutta are a warning how grave the situation is since the departure of the Cabinet Mission.

Remember how only last November the crowds were demonstrating in the streets of Calcutta, Hindus and Muslims alike, under the slogan of "Hindus and Muslims Unite," "Down with British Imperialism." The same great demonstrations took place in Bombay and other towns and reached their height with the Naval rising in February, when the Indian warships ran up the joint flags of the Congress and the League. The British authorities feared this Hindu-Muslim unity. They feared the end of British rule in India.

THEN the Cabinet Mission came to India. Their whole tactics were based on playing off Hindus against Muslims—the Congress against the League. The proposed constitution and machinery of the Constituent Assembly is based on placing Hindus and Muslims in separate compartments. In the same way the first proposal of an Interim Government was based on balancing Hindus and Muslims. Inevitably these tactics have intensified communal antagonism and helped to bring about the present dangerous position.

Now the Nehru Ministry is in process of formation and may be formed by the time these words appear. Every well-wisher of India will hope that the establishment of this Ministry of Indian leaders will help to bring an improvement of the situation. At the same time we cannot afford to be blind to the very difficult and dangerous conditions under which this Ministry will have to function.

The Nehru Ministry is not an independent National Government, but in its constitutional policy an enlarged Viceroy's Council with full overriding power still resting in the hands of the Viceroy.

BRITISH military occupation still continues in India. Indians justly ask how can there be talk of Indian independence or of a free Constituent Assembly determining India's future, so long as the Interim Government and Constituent Assembly have to function under the shadow of British military occupation.

The Congress have only been invited to form a Ministry on the understanding and their explicit declaration that they accept the British plan for India "in its entirety." But this plan does not give India freedom. The proposed Constituent Assembly is neither democratic nor sovereign. It is based on indirect election from a restricted electorate and is divided into Hindu and Muslim groupings with a right of mutual veto. One quarter of the seats are allocated to the Princes with no provision for democratic representation. The proposed constitution partitions India into separate Hindu and Muslim groupings alongside the Princes' States, and provides only for a weak central Government with power restricted to foreign policy and defence, and with no power for any economic or social planning.

FINALLY, the Congress Ministry is faced at present with the sharp antagonism of the Muslim League, which has called for direct action. In consequence, there is danger, unless Congress-League co-operation is established, that a position could arise in which the Congress Ministry would find itself dependent on British armed forces for suppressing the League. This would be a most extreme and dangerous development of the methods of divide and rule.
THE Communist Party of India is conducting a magnificent fight for Indian National Unity and real independence. They advocate Congress-League unity and urge that the differences can be settled on the basis of the principle of national self-determination within a free India. They urge a joint Congress-League-Communist common front to win Indian freedom.

From my visit I have carried away a deep and lasting impression of the universal desire of all Indians for the freedom of their country. I have also carried away a very deep impression of the heroism and fighting capacity of the masses of the Indian people, and their determination to win a better future.

We have the duty in this situation, to stand by the Indian people’s fight, for their interests are common with ours in the struggle against Imperialism and reactionary policy. We need to spread understanding of the conditions and problems of the Indian people. We need to combat the illusions which have been spread with regard to the Cabinet Mission’s plan as already giving India freedom. We must demand full and effective independence for India, the withdrawal of British troops and the right of the Indian people to determine their own future through a democratically-elected and sovereign Constituent Assembly.

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