

Empire Gives Lie to British War Aims

Repression in Africa, India Tells Own Tale

By GEORGE PADMORE

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"WE are fighting against evil things—brute force, bad faith injustice, persecution and oppression," declared the British Prime Minister in his statement of Allied war aims. In other words, the Second World War, like the first, is again being fought for democracy and the right of self-determination for small nations.

It was natural, therefore, that these lofty sentiments expressed by Mr. Chamberlain would find an immediate response among the hundreds of millions of colored subject peoples in the British and French colonial empires, who, too, are struggling for full democratic rights and national freedom.

INDIA'S CLAIM REJECTED

On the basis of the Prime Minister's declaration, the Indian National Congress, the largest political body in the "Jewel of the British Crown," addressed a memorandum to the Viceroy of India, asking him to state in explicit terms in what way did Britain intend to implement her profession to democracy in relation to India, and for that matter, to other sections of the colonial empire.

After conferring with Mr. Gandhi and other Indian leaders, the government has now issued a statement to the effect that there is to be no extension of democracy in India during the course of the war, but in the event of victory, the government promises to convene a round-table conference, like the one held in London some years ago, to review the scheme for a federal government in India and to see if and how improvement can be made.

In the meanwhile, the Indian workers and peasants, like the Africans, are expected to fight loyally and die for the freedom of the Poles, Czechs and other white peoples in Europe who might be the victims of Nazi aggression.

The British government's action is a great disappointment. It is not only a rebuff to the hopes and aspirations of the Indian people, but to all other subject races of the Empire, struggling for full democracy, national freedom and social emancipation from the yoke of finance-capital. However, it should have one good effect: that of removing the illusion created among the British people, especially the workers, that in supporting their imperialist class, they are really helping to spread democracy within their Empire.

India has rendered a great service

out of war. But the sincerity of anyone—particularly in the labor movement—who says 'keep America out of war' is judged by his willingness to speak out against all dictatorship, including that of Stalin.

"Your silence in answer to this letter will be construed by us as meaning that your committee is motivated by the new policy of the communists. We do not intend to see our movement libelled among honest unionists by union committees that have been communist-inspired."

to the common peoples of the world by tearing the mask off the face of those who attempt to hide their imperialist aims behind a barrage of platitudinous verbosity. The British ruling class stand exposed for what they are: arch-humbugs!

REPRESSION IN AFRICA

Now let us turn to Africa and see what is happening there. Despite the censorship, we know that the forces of reaction are strengthening their grip upon the natives. The few rights which they enjoyed are being filched from them under a variety of war emergency regulations.

No sooner was war declared than the government of Sierra Leone, West Africa, arrested Wallace Johnson, the organizing secretary of the West Africa Youth League and president of the Sierra Leone Trade Union Congress. All strike and trade-union activities have been forbidden. The workers are being terrorized by threats under the Emergency Powers Act.

Similar repression is operating in the West Indies where the sugar planters and oil barons are attempting to deprive the workers of the few concessions which they were forced to make during the strikes and other labor disturbances which swept over the islands last year.

But the case of Wallace Johnson is typical of what is in store for those natives who dare to demand justice and fair play for their people during the war. This man committed no offense. The authorities simply considered him a "dangerous" person, raided his home, confiscated all his books and other literature and placed him under protective arrest. For, according to the Deportation Ordinance enacted into law last May, the governor has the right to order the arrest and deportation of any native whom he considers an undesirable. In the eyes of the bureaucrats, trade-union organizers are the most "undesirable" people. The war has given them their opportunity and they intend to use their powers to the full. These so-called "trustees of the natives" are in reality the defenders of vested interests.

Were it not for the vigilance of a small group of M. P.s, who from time to time raise colonial grievances in the House of Commons, the British people would know even less than they do at present about the rotten state of affairs in their colonial empire. The following interrogation of the Secretary of State for Colonies in the House on October 13 shows how necessary it is for Parliament to keep a close watch on the Colonial Office and its representatives in the non-self-governing sections of the Empire.

SIERRA LEONE "DEFENSE" RULES

On the above date, Mr. Creech Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Colonies whether Mr. Wallace Johnson was still under arrest in Sierra Leone, with what crime he was charged, and whether he would be brought to trial.

The Secretary of State for the

IT WORKS BOTH WAYS

The trouble with this sort of "logic" is that it works both ways. By this time, it is common knowledge that the Russian monarchists in Paris are pro-Stalinist and support the Russian invasion of Finland. Moreover, the Russian fascists in Berlin are now followers of the same Kremlin line, and are whooping it up against the Finns. It would be only too easy to show—in the style of a Socialist Appeal editorial—that Trotsky is lined up with Milukov and is in league with the Russian fascists. Extending the method further, upon the basis of Hitler's notorious control of the Russian fascists in Berlin, one can then prove that Trotsky is in league with Hitler, and that Felix Morrow is a Nazi agent. This at once recalls the Moscow trials, in which by this logic, Stalin attempted to prove that the Trotskyites and Bukharinites were agents of the Gestapo. The Trotskyites rightfully protested against this as a frame-up, but their editor is not adverse to pursuing the identical method against the Socialist Party and the I.L.L.A. to serve his own factional ends.

What we have here is a distortion of the simple and elementary law of logic by which two things that are equal to a third are equal to each other. If both A and B are equal to C, then A is equal to B. It works in

Colonies (Malcolm MacDonald): "Mr. Wallace Johnson is detained under a Sierra Leone Defense Regulation, corresponding to Regulation 18B of the Defense Regulation in force in this country—which provides for such detention when the governor is satisfied that it is necessary to prevent the individual concerned acting in a way prejudicial to public safety or defense. Mr. Johnson's objections as to his detention will be heard by an Advisory Committee set up, as provided by the Regulations, consisting of the Chief Justice, a senior administrative officer, and one of the African Unofficial Members of the Legislative Council."

Mr. Creech Jones: "Will the right honorable gentleman impress upon colonial governors and governments the importance of safeguarding civil and political liberty during the period of the war and that natives or inhabitants of the territories should not be interned merely for holding unpopular opinions?"

Mr. MacDonald: "The colonial governors and governments are fully aware of that consideration and are anxious to carry it out."

Mr. Paling: "Does the right honorable gentleman's answer mean that this man has been detained, and is being detained, for no reason whatever, except that somebody there does not like him, and is it not time that kind of thing was finished, particularly at this time?"

Mr. MacDonald: "No, sir; the answer does not mean that at all. The law of procedure as regards this matter in the colonies is similar to that which has been consented to in this House in the present emergency."

The only comment we need add to the above is that the Unofficial African Member referred to by the Secretary of State as one of Johnson's judges is none other than the man whose candidacy for the Legislative Council is being opposed by Johnson, who has been nominated by the trade unions.