

CHAPTER II

CLUMSY PROPAGANDA

Independence of India would retard victory.

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"Gandhi offers no constructive programme for India".

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"Gandhi's fast would only help Japan."

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"Gandhi for all practical purposes is the Congress Party"—BRITISH CONFIDENTIAL CIRCULAR.

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Gandhi is not all India nor all his party—
T. A. RAMAN.

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"All Propaganda is generally false but British propaganda is most clumsy and ridiculous"—A MEMBER OF LORD LINLITHGOW'S CABINET.

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While the heart of the U. S., the country of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, is hundred per cent for India's freedom, there is no dearth of persons in that country who can be made to disparage India. Most of them are persons of British blood and affiliation with Bri-

tish imperialism. Some of them are simply attracted by the almighty dollar.

Most of the articles are written by editors who, originally British, have become American citizens, like the Chief Editor of the 'Washington Post', while others are published in papers like the 'New York Times', which, as everyone knows in the States, is a particular ally of the British Foreign Office. The largest number of anti-Indian writings are contributed to American papers by 'subsidized' American Missionaries, who have enjoyed British hospitality, British honours, titles and bounties during their stay in India. The British also have their own chain of letter-writers whose job is to write 'Letters to the Editor' in different States arguing against Indian independence.

Here is a typical letter from a British propagandist in the 'New York Herald-Tribune':—

"Mr. Gandhi offers no constructive programme for India, while demanding to be released at once from a Government which has given India the only forward impetus she has had for two thousand years. It is not too much to say that the only constructive benefits to India so far have come through the Christian Church and the British Empire.

"Mr. Gandhi did not have any love for untouchables until he found that the constitution

provided for them a certain number of votes. Then his heart warmed up to them considerably."

BANKERS TO THE RESCUE

The Royal Bank of Canada, in a four-page publication on India issued in December 1943, at the expense of either the Indian tax-payer, or the British Information Office, stated: "Uninformed or partisan statements have given a distorted image of India as a place of down-trodden humanity. As a matter of fact, *India has been ahead in the world in many of the basic freedoms.*"

This publication tried to impress the Americans that India is a paradise from the industrial viewpoint and Indian business men are harvesting huge profits from the war. It also told Americans that the British had checked the perpetual famine in India, when ironically enough in the same winter one million Indians were dying of starvation in the province of Bengal alone. Probably the President of the Royal Bank of Canada did not read any papers of his own country which prominently featured the Canadian Government's offer of wheat to famine-stricken Bengal.

AND MISSIONARIES TOO

British propaganda authorities in Washington, persuaded the well-known Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America to issue an eight-page publication in their *Information Service*, a weekly bulletin. In this issue, one finds the following remark against the Indian National Congress :

“Its internal organization is considered to be far from democratic, with controls in the hands of a very small clique. Its interest in Parliamentary Government is thought to depend on its own retention as the best organized party, or a more or less permanent majority. By the Muslim League, Hindu Mahasabha, the Depressed Classes and the Independent Labour it is accused of aiming to make itself ‘the only party in the land’ as is the case in Fascist and Nazi regimes—a result which would be a death-blow to democracy.”

This missionary publication was also sent out in hundreds of thousands by the British Information Service to all parts of the States. An interesting quotation in this publication stated that Congressmen were fed up with Gandhi's non-violence and as a result the Congress membership had dropped by 30 lakhs since 1938-39.

INDIA ABOVE FOUR FREEDOMS

The following gems are from a publication entitled "Four Freedoms in India," issued by B. I. S :—

'The betrayal of Indian democracy is a betrayal of the cause of the United Nations,' said an American editorial recently.

'India's masses demand freedom,' said another.

'What are the hopes and fears of Indian democracy and what part is it playing in the world conflict between the democracies and the dictators ?

'No Government can maintain its existence without the support of the people and still less in the face of their active opposition.

'There is little evidence of conflict between the Government of India and the Indian peasantry and workers who constitute over 90 per cent of India's 389,000,000.

'Far behind the few hundred thousand active members of the Congress and other parties who are politically-minded, stand the masses of the cultivators and workmen who are interested not in politics but in their crops, and, once the day's work is over, in the goings of their neighbours in a circle of five miles around.

'The politically-minded are essentially the urban intelligentsia.

'Defining a town as a unit with a population of 4,000 and upwards and assuming as one must in India, that women and children below 15 years are not interested in politics, the 1931 census showed: 13,500,000 male Hindus living in towns; 5,800,000 male Muslims living in towns.

'This gives a rough total of 20,000,000.

'As the population as a whole has increased 15 per cent since the 1931 census, we may assume that some 23,000,000 people in India are potentially politically-minded.

'This leaves some 366,000,000 who are not.'

'This may or may not be a regrettable fact but it is not one which originated with the British occupancy of India; throughout India's history kings and conquerors have come and gone, armies have fought and bled, while the peasantry has gone about its daily tasks. The ruling and the fighting was done by the priestly and warrior castes, not by the people.

'During the political disturbances of August and September, the cultivator went on ploughing his field around his quiet village and the workman went on at his lathe.

'What is the force that holds the Government of India and the mass of the Indian people together ?

'The Atlantic Charter guarantees four freedoms to the world of the post-war future.

'Freedom of Speech, Freedom of Religion, Freedom from Fear and Freedom from Want.

'It may be necessary to promise the first three of these freedoms to other countries, but India has already been enjoying them for over a hundred years.

'Freedom of Speech. Having little persistent interest in politics, the peasant's great object is to have his say in the matters of crops, irrigation, land revenue and the general welfare of his village. One has only to go through the records of the district officers and the numerous petitions to the commissioners, to provincial governments and to the Governors, to see how freely the people exercise the right of free speech and to see how prompt has been governmental action in response.

'Freedom from Fear. This is closely coupled with freedom of speech, and with the absence of threats of invasion. During the last 150 years, the tiller of the soil has experienced no invasion, has been protected from criminal and lawless elements, and has enjoyed the fruits of peace and stable government.

'Freedom from Want. This is an ideal *not* attained by any country in the world hitherto. All Governments have made varying efforts to secure it for their people, the Government of India far from least.

'Floods, drought and pestilence (none of which are political in origin) bring fear of want to India's masses.'

While in this essay British propaganda tried to prove that very few Indians were interested in politics and that their interest was solely confined to a radius of five miles from their village, in another circular they told the American people that the Indian farmers and labourers knew all about the designs of Hitler and Tojo and that they occasionally burnt the effigies of both.

GANDHIJI'S FAST

In another confidential publication entitled *Why is Gandhi fasting?* British propaganda told the Americans that Gandhi's fast would only help the Japanese. The publicity for Gandhi's fast could not help the freedom of India. His fast was likely to lead to disturbances. He doubtless hopes that his picturesque paraphernalia of goat's milk and loin-cloth will attract its usual headlines in the outside world and thus renew attention to the Congress Party's demand

for independence. If publicists devote columns to his fast, Gandhi will have attained his first objective. The author of this clumsy propaganda first claimed that the fast would not help the freedom of India and then within five lines contradicts himself by admitting that it would "renew attention to the Congress Party's demand for independence."

In defence of the British refusal to Indianize the Viceroy's Executive Council, propaganda agents told Americans: "As long as there are in the Executive Council four British members who can be relied on to treat communal issues on their merits, the actual representation of Indian parties and interests in the Council is a question of minor importance; remove the British members and the question at once assumes major importance."

LOSS OF FACE

"Why did the Viceroy refuse to allow Rajagopalachari to see Gandhi?" was the text of another bright confidential publication sent out for the use of British propagandists in America. Among the reasons given were :

"There is no evidence that Jinnah has requested Rajagopalachari to see Gandhi with a view to a compromise, the evidence of Jinnah's recent declarations points the other way.

'Sporadic incidents in the civil disobedience movement still continue and public opinion, especially Muslim opinion, associates these incidents with the Congress Party.

'Gandhi for all practical purposes is the Congress Party ; the Party has never once in the long run succeeded in any attempt to act against Gandhi's wishes.

'Permission to interview Gandhi would at once be taken in India to mean that Government was beaten and considering negotiations with the Congress Party. No Western country can appreciate the significance of loss of face in an Asiatic country.

"Those in self-proclaimed open rebellion' would, just at a moment when their movement was at its lowest ebb, receive tremendous encouragement ; they would believe at once that their violence had succeeded and that 'just a little more' was all that was needed to win through. The movement would be rekindled. The Muslims and other minorities and the overwhelming mass of India which are standing aloof from the disobedience movement and which looks to Government for law, order and the prosecution to victory of the war against the Axis would be consternated.

'Don't forget that to recognize the Congress Party's claim to speak for the whole of India,

and allow them to form a Government without agreement with the other parties, would mean that British bayonets would be required to keep the Congress Party Government in office.'

WHY NO GANDHI-JINNAH INTERVIEW

In a confidential circular entitled, *Should Gandhi be allowed to see Jinnah*, British propaganda, even as late as May 26, 1943, told the Americans that Gandhi had not condemned the disturbances; had this disobedience secured the support of the Indian people and had they been successful a Japanese occupation of India would have followed. The truth was that Gandhiji had condemned the disturbances as early as September 1942 and yet after eight months the Mahatma was being painted as a supporter of violence.

The circular went on to say :

'To permit Mr. Gandhi to write to Mr. Jinnah would be to start a claim which could only in the end release the detained leaders without any assurance and at a time when their sabotage move was dead.

'A letter to Mr. Jinnah would be likely to be followed by a request on plausible ground for Mr. Gandhi to consult his other detained colleagues on receipt of the answer. He might say that he could only open discussion for 'a

settlement' as a free man and there would then follow an agitation for the release of the whole group. The party leaders would then have been unconditionally set free without renunciation of their programme and civil disobedience movement revived.

'The real issue is far wider than the question of facilities for discussion between Mr. Jinnah and Mr. Gandhi. In reality the interests not only of the defence of India but of victory for the United Nations are at stake and the Government of India could not take a step which could seriously injure the successful prosecution of the war.'

JINNAH'S WINDOW-DRESSING

British propaganda in defence of their attitude in refusing to deliver Gandhi's letter to Mr. Jinnah said: "Mr. Jinnah's recent suggestion that Mr. Gandhi should open negotiations was political window-dressing on Mr. Jinnah's part since he could foresee that the Government of India would never allow it and that he would in fact be called upon to face the hazards of negotiation."

LIKE THE U. S. !

In yet another ridiculous news release the imperial propaganda machine told Americans

that the Governments in the N.-W. F. Province and Assam, etc., "have approximately the same powers as a State of the United States." A well-informed commentator who knew that the Government in the Frontier Province was a Government of the minority party, while a number of members of the majority party, Congress, were held in detention, told me in Detroit: "The British are very anxious to pretend that they have established a democratic Government in the Frontier Province, but how on earth do they compare it to that of a State in the United States? In our country there is not a single instance of a minority Government forced on the majority kept behind prison bars." This publication had the following headlines:—

1. 115,000,000 Indians govern themselves.
2. Provincial autonomy at work in six provinces.
3. Significance of N.-W. F. Province's return to popularly elected ministry.

RETARDING VICTORY !

An interesting but insidious confidential circular to British propagandists in America with the caption *Will Independence hasten or retard victory?* stated: "If acting under well-intentioned but uninformed outside pressure, the British Government were to support a political

settlement which was denounced as a betrayal of Muslim, or Sikh, or Hindu rights, this would be followed by communal bloodshed on a serious scale which could not but create a serious conflict of loyalties in the minds of large numbers of the Indian Army, today numbering over 1,500,000 volunteers and increasing at the rate of 70,000 men a month.

'The relations between men who should be comrades in arms would be seriously strained and they would always be despondently wondering what was happening to their families back in their village. The Army might either become unreliable or melt away to its villages.

'Thus any political settlement imposed from the outside against the wishes of any leading Indian party might put out of the war one of the United Nations' most powerful and proven Armies. Would that hasten victory?'

THAT 'NO' TO PHILLIPS

'In their defence of their refusal to permit William Phillips to see Mahatma Gandhi, British propaganda told Americans: "The Government of India is anxious to do nothing which would damp the enthusiasm of all those wide and powerful sections of India which are giving such splendid co-operation in the war effort.

'In the eyes of these sections, at least one

preliminary is necessary before negotiations can be opened with Mr. Gandhi, namely that Mr. Gandhi should disown last year's acts of violence and terrorism.

'Negotiations opened without this preliminary would be regarded as a victory for their instigators.'

This lame excuse was invented despite the fact that, as already pointed out, the Mahatma had strongly condemned violence eight months before Mr. Phillips was refused the interview. I refer to Gandhiji's letter of September 23, 1942 to Lord Linlithgow, against the suppression of which Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mr. Rajagopalachari had protested.