

A New Deal for India

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THE world at large and particularly the Western countries have been accustomed to heading of India primarily in terms of her internal politics, the Congress, the Moslem League, untouchables, Gandhism, and off an J on of British imperialism. Lately the emphasis has shifted to the rupture between what they call the Indian Union and Pakistan, now two separate political entities, but ethnically and historically constituting one indivisible whole.

And this is heard practically to the exclusion of the other side of the Indian question namely India's social, industrial and economic position, even though in the last analysis it is this aspect of the question that ultimately activates her political currents. For beneath the veneer of the political cacophony lies the stark reality of India's economic backwardness, which is crying out to be tackled and remedied.

How dreadfully urgent is her economic problem can be judged from the fact that although technically sovereignty has been restored to the Indian people, the change has had little beneficent effect upon the life of her people who are just as bad if not worse than before. A Nehru and a Liaquat Ali may be sitting in the highest seats of power conferred by a British Dominion constitution, that has scarcely made any difference to the average Indian economically or even politically.

Even if the Nehrus and the Liaquats remain where they are and the political structure now erected is maintained intact for the next ten years, it does not inspire even the most sanguine to imagine radical changes in the overall life of the Indian people. This realistic expectation is a sufficient indication that without the solution of India's economic problem, her political freedom will largely remain a myth and she will continue to be a liability and a festering sore which may affect the world's health.

For generations past when the world was making headway in industrial production and harnessing science liberally to make humanity's material life richer and fuller, India was writhing in backwardness, relying upon the most primitive means of production. This was chiefly due to the imperial economy which subjected her productive capacity to its own needs, and in the process arrested and stultified her natural growth.

The result was that poverty came suddenly and disastrously upon a people who even in feudal days were generally free from want. With poverty came restlessness, discontent, and mental inflammation, which eventually resolved itself into a political movement of a negative sort. "Drive the British out" became the central theme of her politics and although it had full justification to be, and was inevitable in the circumstances, for

sometime it hid the main issue from public sight, the issue of restoring and accelerating her productive capacity.

Even today India is suffering from that negative mentality because the world is still neglecting to take notice of her economic backwardness and driving her towards a state of political tumult. It is high time therefore that the countries of the West abandoned the habit of looking upon India as an attractive field for playing petty power-politics, of benefitting by differences among her people.

For should this state of affairs be allowed to go on for too long, and India's economic growth is retarded, the possibility of a gigantic explosion cannot be avoided, an explosion that can shake and even raze to the ground many parts of Asia. If today even the staunchest American isolationists realise that without a peaceful Europe there cannot be a peaceful America, how on earth can anyone harbour the hope that Asia can be left to wallow in its primitivity without it having dangerous ill-effects upon the future of the World?

But there is substantially a difference between the problem of Europe and the problem of Asia of which India is a part. Europe is already technically and industrially advanced, and the main task there is of restoration. In India (and Asia) industry has to be introduced, not haphazardly, and at leisure but speedily and on a planned basis, and a new industrial society created. Thus in India the task is not of "investment" in the form of introducing means of production, but of re-organising her social order. To view the problem of India in any other way is to dangerously misunderstand it.

Therefore from the point of view of world tranquility what happens to India is far more urgent than what happens in India. The process of her industrialisation may involve an anti-religious, anti-feudal or even anti-capitalist revolution. Whether that development takes place peacefully or violently, what matters is that it has to take place. There has therefore to be a new outlook towards India, one that takes a keen and sympathetic interest in her social and industrial progress. The chief issues in India, therefore, are not Pakistan vs. Hindustan, or capitalism vs. socialism but industrialization vs. backwardness.

In the last few years much talk has taken place both here and abroad about Indian industrialization. There have been tentative plans and suggestions by individuals and experts from time to time. But all these have come to nought as a result of the division of India, which let it be emphasised, came about as a result of British insistence. True, Mr. Jinnah and his Moslem League asked

for partition of India. But had it not been for British insistence it need not have come about.

Britain did it, guided solely by the narrow vision of power-politics of dividing and weakening a "truculent" people. The division has created animosity among her people, and what is worse destroyed the social and economic pattern to which the country had been accustomed for thousands of years. One day Britain will regret what she has done to India. Temporarily she may be elated by the success of her Machiavellian plans. Her diehards may be gleefully viewing the spectacle of India, formerly a thorn in her flesh, plunged in a heart-rending chaos. But this chaos is dangerous as well as infectious. It can spread to other parts of the Asiatic continent.

The immediate result of the vivisection was that all the plans made for industrialization of India have of necessity had to be abandoned. The division has so thoroughly upset everything, that it is not an exaggeration to say that as far as industrial policy is concerned both the Dominions are now moving in a lacuna. Cloth which is manufactured in Western India is now practically unavailable in Pakistan. Jute which is produced in Pakistan is subjected to export restrictions. Bihar's iron and coal are beyond Pakistan's reach. All in all Pakistan is without manufactured materials, and the Indian Union is short of food. If the basis of Indian economy has thus been rent asunder, however can there be any talk of planned industrialization?

It is a great harm done to the country indeed, and it would be in the world's interest not to aggravate it by sneakishly encouraging India's internecine feuds, as happened in the cases of Kashmir and Hyderabad. One day tempers will cool down in India, and reality will impell all activity and thought into constructive channels. But today, alas! all moves are made purely and simply to drag India into the orbit of the Western bloc without a thought being spared for what it may lead to in the future.

When the national plans for industrialisation were rendered meaningless Indian capital began to move on its own individually and sporadically, Indian industrialists who found themselves with sizeable surpluses of money, began laying out their own limited plans for investment. However such investment was impossible without the importation of goods from foreign countries. The nature of these goods could only be heavy machinery of which India is in dire need.

But in the conditions obtaining in the world today buying in foreign countries without the co-operation of the Governments concerned only leads to chaos and wastage. European industry, battered and disorganised, could not supply India's requirements. British industry, itself starved for raw materials, could scarcely render succour. Over and above it, as always, political consideration weighed with Britain in determining her trade policy. She preferred to pour large amounts into the Middle East, while neglecting the needs of India. In her reckoning the Middle East has a strategic consideration. In a frame of mind obsessed by the thought of war what chance had India to press her point of view?

The Russians, as usual, remained watchful and silent, giving no indication whether they were able or willing to supply India's needs. It was just impossible to make any calculations on the basis of Russian assist-

ance. The result was all the exodus went to the U. S., and what happened there makes a sorry tale.

The goods supplied were not only at exorbitant prices, but most of what America (or her dealers) supplied was totally superfluous in India. Any amount of "plastic" goods arrived, combs and toothbrushes and face powder and fountain pens, and tea-strainers and rubber balls, and fancy piecegoods, but nothing in the nature of capital goods. Whatever semblance of machinery arrived was chiefly second-hand stuff (they call it "rebuilt" these days) and very little of it was useful for building industrial plants.

Thus the meagre resources of the individual Indian industrialist were allowed to be wasted abroad without regard to the Future, without calculating the ill-effects it would have. (Oh, yes! and fine pompous automobiles also arrived. But they were soon laid up in garages for want of petrol.)

The bold fact has to be faced, not only by India, but by foreign governments that the development of India is not possible on the basis of individual effort nor on the arrangements and deals private traders work out among themselves. India is too enormous a country, and her development is in too backward a stage, to allow off any planless industrial development.

Of course the foreign governments may turn round and reply that their hands are too full at the moment, and other problems facing them are too urgent, to pay attention to India's and Asia's needs at the moment. This although a seemingly sound argument is not altogether convincing.

It is an evident fact that too much of Western industry is devoted to the production of material usable directly or indirectly for purposes of war. Although for the time being this may seem to be a defensive preparation the accumulative effect of it would be starving the world of essential goods and hastening the contingency of war. More pointedly, to allow India and Asia to wallow in primitivity is to accelerate discontent and water the seeds of war.

We here are a little tired of the monotonous drawl from America and Britain "our industry is overworked and cannot supply orders for several years to come". If American industry could boast of such colossal production of planes and tanks and ships during the war, why cannot they turn out machinetools, and heavy equipment when there is no war? How is it they can produce combs and rubber balls and fountainpens and tomato ketchups in such quantities and look upon its export with equanimity? How can Britain afford to send millions and millions of yards of cotton and silk while refusing to comply with machinery orders?

That excuse of American and British industry being overworked has worn thin. We are wondering here whether the British and American Governments still believe they can fool the world this way, and whether they truly believe that neglecting Asia's needs is going to contribute towards world peace.

This, if any, is the time to revise their policies, to switch off from that dangerous and suicidal policy of exchanging commodities for strategic and political benefits. The Marshall Plan is destined to founder on the rock of unreality if its motive force is foreign policy considerations, and confines itself only to a portion of Europe. The lesson of today is that development of countries cannot take place separately and in isolation.

and that the world must develop as one single economic and productive unit. Short of that everything that is being done today will eventually lead not only to a war, but unparalleled and wanton destruction.

Furthermore that old habit of looking upon the West as the world's industrial area, and the East as the storehouse of raw materials and pasture for colonial domination has to be abandoned. What is at stake is not the political preponderance of a set of powers over the rest, but of the human race itself. An impoverished and weak Asia and Africa, where disease and famine play havoc, can hardly encourage universal safety or peaceful conditions.

The logical task for the nations of the world, and in particular for Britain, Russia and America, is to review the economic situation of the world and to devote attention to enabling *each* part its natural (as against forced) growth. It would be sinister, for instance, to pour money into Middle Eastern oil if the only purpose it is intended to serve is to fuel the machines of the next war, it is criminal to make the wheels of European machinery turn to manufacture missiles and projectiles. It is shameless and ultimately ruinous to drain India of her minerals to produce explosives.

India's economic and industrial development can fit only in the larger international cooperative framework. Of course this does not mean that in the absence of it she will have no development at all. But that development, even in the most favourable circumstances, will be of a haphazard nature.

If the Western powers are at the moment shy of entering into an overall plan, it is open to them to come to terms individually with nations. Nor will there be any grudges if the assistance provided is smaller than it requires to be. At the most it may lengthen the process of development, but it will certainly end stagnation which is what is happening today.

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India has iron, aluminium, mica, manganese, coal, limber, copper, various types of metals, cotton, jute, thorium, not to mention food and other raw materials. Her industrial growth must revolve around the exploitation of these, and what she needs is machinery for tills purpose. Not just machinery for this purpose, but machinery that will manufacture machinery to facilitate their manufacture. She has not only a needy, but a large population, so that whatever she manufactures, apart from having an "internal" market, can always produce surpluses to supply the world's needs.

True, she may not have the "money" to buy the machinery she needs, but she should have the credit considering her potentialities. In any case, in the future the terms "supply", "bargain", even "trade" and "commerce" will have to be obliterated in favour of "assistance" and "co-operation". America has realised that in the case of Europe. The West must do so in the case of Asia and Africa.

Obviously, therefore, one cannot view with favour the present method of sporadic and even spurious "trading" that is going on between India and the Western countries. It is wasteful and does not solve anybody's problems satisfactorily. There has to be a planned development, and although it is possible for India to draw up a plan for herself, it would be more harmonious to draw up that plan in conjunction with other countries including Russia.

Furthermore the fulfilment of that plan may not call for immediate and reciprocal exchange. It can be spread over a generation if necessary, whether it be in the case of receiving or supplying. And lastly, but seriously, none of the assistance that is given or taken must be motivated by selfish political considerations internally or internationally. It is disastrous in the long run for India, or any other country, to receive assistance merely as a reward for supporting one bloc of powers against another. For that will not be development of productive powers but merely the primary preparation for war.

If there is any country in the world which is sorely in need of peace, it is India. She has to go a long way before catching up with the West. Her development is not only going to benefit her own people, but a very large part of Asia and Africa who even in her present backward state depend upon her. The hypnotic spell under which the West is labouring that "Recovery" can afford to overlook India, or her neighbouring countries are doing so at a great peril. For should Western statesmanship neglect to notice these urgencies, as a measure of self preservation India, too, will have to play her cards cunningly and selfishly in the game of power politics, a role which will be forced upon her by the callous shortsightedness of the Big Powers.

There is latent in the Asiatic mind a bitter hatred and distrust of "the whites". The embers of that hatred will be fanned into flames if the West continues to look upon it as an area condemned to permanent backwardness. Maybe, at the most for a generation the Asiatic can be stifled with the material weight which the West has developed.

But the West itself is becoming a house divided against itself, and at the present rate will not take long to become a spent force. Then perhaps the reckoning will come in the shape of the "coloured races" against the "whites". And in whose interest will all this be? Maybe, temporarily in Asia's, but certainly no; in humanity's. That is written large on the wall of history, if the West only cares to open its eyes.