

THE PROBLEM OF INDIA

(Continued from previous page)

Commonwealth? Yes, said Cripps. Could she make treaties with other countries? Yes. Would there be obstacles now to applying the Atlantic charter to India? None at all, said Cripps, and so on and so on.

Cripps answered every question without the slightest hesitation and in the plainest style.

Why Did He Fail?

Yet, as you know, Cripps failed to obtain a settlement. Why? Because the Congress leaders were not content to accept office in the Central Government under the Viceroy but insisted on complete and immediate independence; and Mr. Gandhi, as you know, has recently repeated this demand. He is willing, it seems, that the British and American forces in India should stay there to defend his country against the Japanese, but the British Government must go at once or Congress will make use of all its non-violent strength. That is to say, it will launch among the Indian races a campaign of disobedience to the law. What that means is grimly apparent. Mr. Gandhi is reported to have described it as open rebellion. Nevertheless he doesn't want, he says, to do anything to embarrass the United Nations. As soon as the present Government has withdrawn a provisional Indian Government will be formed which will organise the drafting of the new constitution.

"Obviously Impracticable"

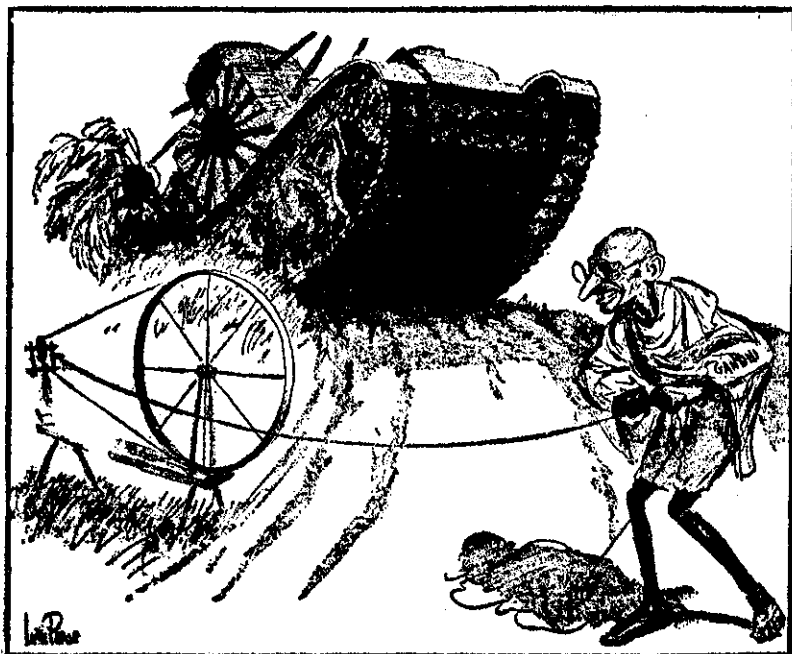
What is one to say to that? It is obviously impracticable. It means, in the first place, that the safety of the British and American forces in India and the security of the whole country as a base for helping China and for counter attack on Japan are to be committed to an independent Indian Government at this moment in the middle of the fighting when the Japs are on the frontier. Transport and communications, the supply of munitions and of food, everything an army needs will be in purely Indian control, and the new Government

will be entitled as a wholly independent Government to deal in its own right with the Government of Japan. It is not a question of trust. The British Government has asked the Congress leaders to take a full and real share in the Government.

The Cart Before the Horse

There are several other reasons why this sudden mid-war abdication is impracticable, but I will mention only one. Mr. Gandhi proposes to form an Indian Government after the present Government has withdrawn, but that puts the cart before the horse. The present Government must have somebody to transfer its power to. Heads of departments can't just leave their files on their office tables and walk out. The whole machinery of Government would be paralysed with disastrous results not only on the war effort but on the daily life of all the people of India. Mr. Gandhi seems to assume that the new Government would be ready to function without a moment's delay, but that, of course, is to jump clean over the whole Indian problem. What about the Moslems? Mr. Jinnah, who certainly commands the allegiance of many million Moslems, has promptly poured scorn on Mr. Gandhi's plan. What about the Princes? Whatever we may think of their methods of government they cannot be just dropped out of the picture.

No, I can't understand how Mr. Gandhi can suppose it to be possible for us to yield to his demand. I go further. I can't really understand why he insists on forcing this quarrel on us now. We promised India complete independence immediately after the war, provided only that the Indians would agree on a form of self-government, and we have ourselves suggested ways by which the obstacles to that agreement could be overcome. That is 100 per cent. We can do no more, and we cannot go back on it even if we wanted to. We are pledged in the face of the world. Surely then something unreal is keeping up the conflict with Britain, at any rate since the Cripps Mission, and especially at this perilous period of the war.



GANDHI DEFENDS INDIA

Peace-Newark "Evening News"

NEW ZEALAND LISTENER, JULY 31

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won't take care
of itself....



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