

## IX. ORGANISED PRO-JAP PROPAGANDA

AS WE HAVE SHOWN EARLIER, THOSE WHO WERE convinced that we had betrayed the country and they were organising the "August Revolution" thought that it failed because the people could not stand up to British repression.

They never paused to reconsider their policy in the light of experience. They were the leaders of the "August Revolution." How could they be wrong? Instead of seeing where and how they went wrong, they went still more wrong. They lost all faith in their own people and felt that unless they were driven to revolt in desperation they would not fight. Organise the "second round" of revolution became their new policy.

In the growing food crisis they saw hope of life becoming unbearable for the people and a desperate revolt by them. Trained revolutionaries, they said, could lead this revolt to success. In the growing menace of Jap invasion and the organisation of Subhas Bose's army they saw a powerful ally for their "revolution" and it was inevitable that the less they were able to do in their own country the more shamelessly they began to rely almost solely on Shri Subhas Bose and the Japs to bring the Freedom Revolution to victory.

Therefore they cooked up two new slogans :

I. "Let us organise ourselves as a small band of revolutionaries."

In the first half of 1943, a printed pamphlet *ABC of Dislocation*, was distributed which gave details of training for sabotage activities. It begins by saying that the mass upsurge died down and the "masses will take some time to recoup their energy." And that this time should be utilised among other things

"to create in every district a band of shock troopers, a sort of advance guard, who should possess the proper technical and political training and who should, in the manner of

guerillas, wage ceaseless war against the enemy. Let us call the band Azad Dastas in Hindustani”

*ABC of Dislocation*, p. 3.

Jai Prakash Narain in his *First Letter to Fighters for Freedom* says that :

“with training a few may succeed where thousands failed before. In every firka and taluka and thana, in every considerable factory and workshop or other industrial centre we must have a band of militants, mentally and materially equipped for the next rising.”

*First Letter to Fighters for Freedom*, p. 13.

*Ninth August*, a C.S.P. organ called the “Fortnightly Journal of the Indian National Congress” and edited by Achyut Patwardhan, described these tasks and said :

“There is nothing to hide about the function of these secret cells . . . whether it is the job of road-cutting, wire-cutting and railway dislocation, or it is the task of leading massive crowds on police stations, prisons, Collectorates and Secretariats with a view to destroy them, these units should consist of *pecially trained men for these various purposes.*”

*Ninth August*, No. 12, January 26, 1944, p. 3.

The tasks for which they wanted to organise themselves are significant and led straight to their second slogan.

II. “No country has ever been freed without foreign aid.”

British terror is too strong over the Indian people. Therefore the natural ally of the Indian revolution is the immediate enemy of our British Imperialist rulers.

Thus the Jap Fascist aggressors against our country instead of being resisted, had to be welcomed as allies and became the only immediate hope for Indian freedom !

Pro-Japanism was no more a distorted form of anti-British hatred but had led to its logical corollary.

Let us see this in their own words.

The demoralisation on the failure of the struggle, and reliance

on the Axis powers find clear expression in the following words of Jai Prakash Narain :

“What more can we do ? I believe and I do not mind saying so publicly that unless there is a shift in the international situation—a *Russo-German Pact*, a *Sino-Japanese Peace*, a *major reverse of British arms, war on Indian soil*—we cannot do anything big.”

*Second Letter to Fighters for Freedom*, p. 14.

What does this mean ? It means that India has no hope of freedom except through a *diplomatic or military victory* of the Fascists. Is this not opposed entirely to every single resolution passed by the Congress since 1936, to the statements made by everyone of you before you were arrested ?

## Co-operate with Japanese

We have seen how they came to believe more and more that unless the war came to Indian soil, i.e., unless the Japs attacked, there was no hope of doing something big. What is the big thing that Jai Prakash Narain wants the people to do when the Japs attack ? Does he ask them to fight the Japs as the non-belligerency group led by Pandit Nehru had said ? Does he ask them to non-co-operate with the Japs and place no obstacles in the way of the Allied fighting forces as the neutrality group, led by Gandhiji, had said ? Listen to Jai Prakash Narain :

“In the areas where war is waged or which the Japanese occupy or where they infiltrate, *the foreigners' civil rule will weaken or come to an end. In these areas we must establish a Swaraj Government.* In the name of this Government we must appeal to retreating units of the Indian Army to stay behind and *become the People's Army. From this day we must prepare to establish such a Government in the Eastern Provinces* which in the course of time might embrace the entire nation. *This preparatory work raises many questions which cannot be discussed here.* It is sufficient to point out

the broad policy and invite the attention of fighters to it as well as of the people generally."

*Second Letter to Fighters for Freedom*, p. 11.

There is not a single word asking for any action against the Japs. In fact it amounts to a clear direction to set up a civil Government to collaborate with the Jap Army.

Achyut Patwardhan, in *Ninth August* goes much further, even to the point of white-washing Japanese atrocities. He wrote :

"For eighteen months Allied propagandists have tried and it has proved absolutely impossible to find any evidence of Jap atrocities or even maladministration in Burma, Malaya and Java."

*Ninth August*, October 23, 1943, p. 9.

Jai Prakash Narain confirms this by saying that the Japs gave Burma freedom and that even the Soviet Union congratulated Tojo on it !

"The conferment of independence upon Burma by the Japanese has received some advertisement and a report says that the Soviet Government has been so much impressed as to congratulate the Tojo Government upon their act of generosity."

*Second Letter to Fighters for Freedom*, pp. 10-11.

Achyut Patwardhan's *Ninth August* even tells our people that the Axis powers are in fact Socialists. It says :

"The Axis have clearly stated their plan, of which a great part, including much very real socialisation has already been carried into effect."

*Ninth August*, September 24, 1943, p. 7.

Having gone over to a policy opposed to our country's interests and the cause of freedom, the Congress Socialist leaders inevitably became happy that Jap bombs were killing our people.

(a) The Japs bombed Madras on 10th October 1943. Here is how the *Ninth August* described it :

"The Japs are not waiting for Mountbatten in Rangoon. Last week they were looking for him in Madras and may be doing so one of these days in Calcutta."

*Ninth August*, October 23, 1943, p. 3.

(b) The Japs bombed Calcutta on December 5th, 1943. Over 300 people, mostly workers from the bustees, were killed. Achyut Patwardhan's *Ninth August* said :

"We have great pleasure in publishing the following account of Jap activity in Eastern India from our sister monthly *Inquilab* of 10th December, 1943."

*Ninth August*, January 1944, p. 12.

The 'sister monthly,' *Inquilab*, edited jointly by Ram Manohar Lohia and Aruna Asaf Ali, was called by them the *Monthly Journal Of The Eastern Zone Headquarters Of The Indian National Congress* and it is in the name of the Congress that they wrote :

"The commonsense of the common man tells him that this new threat to his life and property is of British manufacture, his mood is one of hilarity at the thought that the days when they ruled unchallenged are over."

*Inquilab*, December 10, 1943, p. 13.

This is how the Congress Socialists were carrying on open pro-Japanese propaganda in the name of Congress and secret pro-Japanese sabotage in the name of freedom. They linked up the starvation inside the country with the offer of rice by Subhas Bose and said :

"Moved by the sufferings of his people Syt. Subhas Bose has broadcast, with the authority of the Japanese Government an offer to send through the International Red Cross, ships with a precious cargo of 100,000 tons of Burma rice for the starving people of Bengal if the British Government will permit it."

*Ninth August*, September 24, 1943.

Mark the underlined words. The clear attempt is to tell our people that not only Syt. Subhas Bose but the Jap Government

itself is concerned about our sufferings. In fact throughout Bengal the whisper campaign was that Syt. Subhas Bose's invasion would mean lacs of bags of rice for our starving people.

This open pro-Jap propaganda and activities were made at a time when the Jap peril to India had increased. The defeat of the Nazis at Stalingrad had made it clear that Hitler could not come to India. In May-June 1943 Subhas Bose left Berlin and came to Singapore. His only hope of "liberating" India now lay with the Japs.

The Japs were massing men and material on the other side of the Chindwin River. Bose was forming his Indian National Army. Fighting was going on in the Arakan, a ding-dong ineffectual fighting. The British military authorities were complacently declaring that the Japs could not invade India and many of our own people began to believe it.

## We Warned About Jap Peril

We alone saw the increased peril and in fact as early as November 1943, we were warning our people of it. P. C. Joshi wrote an article "Are the Japs Coming?" in *People's War* of November 21, 1943, in which he said:

"The Japs are in a hurry. The greater grows the offensive sweep of the Red Army, the more desperate must Tojo become. . . . This winter is the last campaigning season for the Japs, for an offensive, when the full strength of the United Nations has not been massed against them. . . . It is *now or never* for the Japs so far as India is concerned."

The Government was furious. It threatened to take action against us for this alarmist propaganda. Within five months what we said came true. The Japs did attack.

These were terrible days for our country.

(1) The threat of Jap aggression was not a remote possibility but actual, near and living.

It is common knowledge today that in April 1944, when the Japs made a sudden attack at Imphal, they achieved a

minor success, cutting off two British divisions at Imphal itself; if they had gone a little further and cut the Dimapur-Calcutta railway line they would have achieved a major victory, for this was the main supply route for Stilwell's army and the British armies in Assam. Had they succeeded in this, the way would have been open for them, to turn south and cut off all Eastern Bengal, even make for Calcutta in the subsequent chaos that would have followed the success of such a major move.

It is common knowledge, again, that only the most bitter fighting—the most bitter of the entire war in Burma and South East Asia—by the British Second Division and the Indian Seventh Brigade at Kohima, in which both Japs and the Allies suffered heavily, stopped the Jap advance at that critical moment.

(2) The morale of our people was very bad. British terror had made them bitter against the British, economic distress in homes had bred helplessness, the domination of the corrupt official and the selfish hoarder over every aspect of life had created the mood that nothing matters, nothing could be worse and nothing works like success.

The vast majority of the Congress leaders and workers inside the jails, the few left outside or released felt and talked like those flattened out.

We discussed the new situation and the new outlook and slogans of these groups as seriously as we could and for long. We came to the conclusion that any person and group who in such a situation as was then existing—military, political and economic—was pro-Jap and for organising acts of sabotage, can no more be classed as an Indian patriot but must be fought as a Fascist agent, as such groups were called all over the world.

We called for fight against sabotage and gave the basic slogan that we must win through National Unity a National Government of National Defence. We named the Congress Socialist Party, the Forward Bloc and the Trotskyites as groups that made the Fifth Column, the agents of the Jap invader.

We want you to note clearly that in this period immediately following August 9 when they were standing by non-violence and only calling for mass mobilisation in general terms, we called them blind patriots.

Soon after when they openly began to advocate sabotage and sabotage activities were taking place in the country, we called them misguided patriots because we knew that their motives were good, they were anti-British and not yet pro-Jap. We argued with many of them personally and, of course, through our press, and agitated among the people that sabotage would not get us freedom but will only get us Jap Fascist rule.

## Why We Called Them "Fifth Column"

Now, when they began openly to do pro-Jap propaganda and began to train their followers to be better saboteurs and guerilla fighters, not against the Japs, but for them, we decided to characterise them as Fifth Column groups who were no more patriotic.

They were no more anti-Imperialists but had become pro-Imperialist. Their hatred of British Imperialism had driven them to seek alliance with Jap Imperialism.

They had lost faith in their own people and had acquired faith in foreign Fascist-Imperialists.

Their sabotage activities before were against the British Imperialists, in their propaganda to the people they had kept silent about the Japs. Their sabotage activities now were related to coincide with Jap invasion of our country.

This is how we thought and argued and felt convinced we were right, not only because our Party said it but also because we saw them repudiating all the anti-Fascist declarations of the Congress—not only in spirit but every letter of them. We recalled what some of you had said you would yourself do if the Japs came into our land and we felt that we were on the right side.

At the Press Conference on the breakdown of Cripps negotiations, Pandit Nehru declared for the Congress that if Bose's way takes shape, it must be fought. He said that :

"the way he has chosen is utterly wrong, a way which we not only cannot accept but must oppose, if it takes shape. Because any force that may come from outside, really comes

*as a dummy force under Japanese control. In effect it helps the invader. . . ."*

*Bombay Chronicle, April 13, 1942.*

It is true they were worth nothing much by themselves and were not able to do anything effective—but that is just why they began thinking and organising themselves in terms of Jap invasion.

In the menacing situation then, of actual Jap aggression and the very bad morale of the people, we considered it our *duty* to denounce the pro-Jap ideas and plans as treachery to our country and repudiation of the grand traditions of our national movement. the people through mass agitation in the threatened zones.

We fought their poisonous ideas spreading among political workers through our press and we fought them spreading among Hundreds of Congressmen who liked almost everything in the *People's War* except its name and whom we characterised as either old world liberal-minded folk or Nehruites, now began to tell us :

"You are right about their policy ; what they are saying is not Congress policy and they are going too far ; but their motives are patriotic ; don't worry so much about them for they can't do anything in the rear."

We argued with them along two lines :

(1) To let their ideas go unchallenged and not expose them is to help the political corruption of our patriotic youth who are avidly reading this literature and to whom they have directed their main appeal and who had no earlier political background.

For these lads were boys before the war and awoke to political consciousness only in the war years, had imbibed little or nothing of the anti-Fascist traditions of the Congress, had turned vaguely pro-Jap already because of their bitter hatred for the British, a hatred that grew more bitter, as our country remained slave, you remained in jail, all of us suffered from the oppression, chaos, corruption and inefficiency of British rule.

(2) These groups may be no more than a nuisance today but they can become a menace with Jap invasion.

Therefore these ideas must be fought out here and now and in time.

To remain neutral was to aid them, corrupt the youth now and help the Jap Fascists next to kill us and all Congressmen who would have held their head high against them and for Indian freedom.