

Writing direct from India, a widely traveled German journalist with no axe to grind shows why the removal of British rule would surely spell disaster.

# Things Seen in INDIA

By COLIN ROSS

Translated from the *Vossische Zeitung*  
Berlin Liberal Daily

THE NATIONALISTS AND SWARAJISTS, the lawyers, labor leaders, journalists, and politicians who compose one million of India's three hundred and twenty million inhabitants, and who speak English and have received a more or less European education, all agree that foreign rule is to blame for their country's troubles. As one goes through the narrow, dirty streets of any Indian city, with misery, filth, and endless poverty swarming on all sides, one's native guide invariably says, 'Of course we are poor, we can't be anything else, the way the English bleed us.' Visit a typical Indian village. It either has no school at all or else a very poor one, and ninety per cent of its inhabitants are illiterate. 'How can it be otherwise?' repeats our guide. 'All the taxes go to the high-paid British soldiers and to the officials; nothing is left to provide the people with education and justice.' Or suppose you happen to witness one of the numerous riots between Hindus and Moslems. 'We should live in peace,' the native again assures us, 'if the Englishmen were not kindling religious hostility and playing one group off against the other.'

All this sounds very illuminating and the natural conclusion ought to be that India must be independent before conditions can be improved. The air is therefore filled with demands for dominion status or complete independence, and immediate action is being urged. Newspapers are full of such appeals and so are the parliamentary debates and the conversations of individuals. All India seems to be united in

this demand, but we tend to forget that we are hearing the voices of only one million out of India's three hundred and twenty million inhabitants. This one million is articulate; the three hundred and nineteen millions are dumb, at least as far as foreigners are concerned. Even if one knows Hindustani it is not of much use since twenty languages and two hundred and twenty dialects are spoken throughout the country.

India is still quiet and firmly held down by the British because only a small part of even these million agitators are ready to fight and die for their country's freedom. As for the remaining three hundred and nineteen millions, they would be satisfied under almost any rule. It would, however, be a mistake to conclude that the British government will not eventually find itself in trouble. As soon as any thought has been formulated and expressed, it becomes dangerous and generally does not rest until it has taken material form. The idea of a free India is a hypothesis that will work itself out of its own accord. Yet, as I have pointed out in my previous dispatches, if England loses India it will only be because she has first made up her mind to do so.

**M**OST of us Germans look upon the English as a selfish, utilitarian people, a nation of hypocrites who utter high-sounding phrases about unity and justice while their minds are on business and profits. But the longer I live and travel in English countries the more I am convinced that the Englishman is much more sentimental than we imagine. He really believes in a good many of the phrases that fall from his lips. Of course there is a certain amount of cant in what he says, but it is impossible to indulge in cant without being affected by it. One cannot play the rôle of public benefactor and liberator without being influenced by this rôle. One cannot keep talking about the white man's burden and still think of nothing but profits. In short, the Englishman has been modified by his own cant.

There is no place where this condition is more clearly revealed than in India. Just as soon as the Englishman began saying that India would some day become a self-governing dominion, the cause of India's freedom made a tremendous advance, a much greater advance than the English could possibly desire. And it now appears that they cannot withdraw, that they are being carried on toward a fate that actually had no likelihood of being realized until they articulated it themselves.

Almost everyone in India believes that the viceroy and the high officials in the Indian Civil Service are enthroned like demigods far above the common people and that they live on a plane infinitely remote from the daily lives and activities of the ordinary Indian. But the Indian parliament in Delhi stands close to the viceroy's palace and

to the two monumental secretariats, and the parliamentary disputes and the polemics of the native press have become the daily bread of the viceroy and his staff. Thus the English officials are subjected to a double influence, for the same arguments that Indian politicians use in demanding immediate dominion status are at once thrown in the faces of the British authorities in India by a section of the British press and of the British parliament. The British police in India, which was perhaps the only department that consistently opposed all manifestations of Indian independence, has done what it can. Its secret agents, for instance, prevented the latest group of British M.P.'s from coming in contact with the people. But, in the long run, neither the British police nor the British army can save India for England, unless the will of the whole British people can be altered.

It is impossible to say how much England is to blame for the poverty, ignorance, and religious strife in India. There is no doubt that during the last century England's eagerness for profits, its destruction of the Indian textile industry so that Lancashire could get the business, and its political and religious intrigues brought misery to India. On the other hand, Great Britain has brought India immense benefits, and the *Pax Britannica* has given India great material advantages in the form of railways, water supplies, hygienic improvements, and medical care.

But this is as it may be; in any event, the slogan 'England is to blame' is a dangerous fallacy, dangerous above all to India itself. By promoting this fallacy the whole problem will be falsified from the start, for the substitution of national government for foreign control will not alter the situation. The real question is how to transform India's mediæval economic system and her ancient social system into modern forms. Nor is this all. The entire population of a vast continent has been living and thinking for many thousands of years in forms utterly different from our own, and these people are now being urged to take over our system entire. Because India has developed a culture utterly different from ours this problem is much more difficult and dangerous than the problem of introducing African savages or Australian bushmen to European civilization. If the British government gives way to a national government the Indian problem will not be ended. It will only have begun.