

# IN THE COLONIES

## MacDonald's Parting Kick.

By M. N. Roy.

There is no use in beating a dead horse. But it is necessary to throw light upon an event which was lost sight of in the excitement of the General Elections in Britain. This event could be called MacDonald's parting kick to India. Of course, he dealt it with quite a different purpose — as the first of many to follow; but unfortunately for him, it proved to be the parting-kick.

We mean the sudden arrest of 72 leading nationalists and the simultaneous raid on several hundred houses in the province of Bengal. This act of terrorism was perpetrated by a Special Ordinance issued by the Viceroy, on October 26. The pretext was to check the growth of "anarchical crimes". But the men arrested were all members of a political party (Swaraj Party) which has repeatedly declared itself against violence, and whose programme does not even call for separation from the Empire. The arrested men have not been put on trial, nor any charge been framed against them. The unconstitutional nature of this act, therefore, is evident.

Now the most interesting part of the event is the complicity of the Labour Government in it. The situation in Britain did not permit any particular attention to be paid to this act of terrorism in India. It was even believed that the Government of India acted on its own initiative, as soon as Labour's return to office became doubtful, because it is indeed difficult to believe that the Labour Government would sanction such high-handed autocracy, which was totally unwarranted. The record of the MacDonald Cabinet, of course, did not leave ground to doubt that it would not rush to the defence of the Empire whenever necessary; but absolutely nothing happened in India to justify such a drastic action. Nevertheless, the Labour Government not only justified the action of the Viceroy once it had been committed, but actually sanctioned it in advance. Absolutely nothing of this complicity of the Labour Government with the uncalled for repression in India was known in Britain. Not a word about it appeared in the press. The London correspondent of the semi-official Calcutta paper, *The Englishman*, cabled the day after arrests were made:

"Whitehall is not surprised at the Bengal arrests, but is only surprised that they were not made much earlier. The British Government were fully aware that the Government of India contemplated taking action, and that the Cabinet had promised fullest support to maintain constitutionalism."

On October 28., the India Office issued a communique concerning events in India. This document was not published in any British paper; but was sent out to India by Reuter. It ran:

"The Viceroy's Ordinance is not aimed at the Swarajist movement or any legitimate activity of the members of that movement. It does not affect lawful interests and activities of any citizen as long as he does not associate himself with the promotion of crimes and violence. The Government is determined to preserve from such crimes that public security on which political progress depends, and intends to proceed along lines of political development laid down by..." "The Ordinance does not create any new offence, but it is directed towards more speedy punishment of the offenders and more effective prevention of acts already defined as crimes under ordinary law."

As mentioned above, there is absolutely no evidence to prove any guilt on the part of the men arrested. So all these theories of "criminal violence and constitutional progress" go wide of the mark. The simple fact is that MacDonald gave in to the demands of Tory Imperialism for a "strong hand in India". He did it just before the elections in order to show that Labour was "fit to govern".

According to its own admission, the Labour Government withdrew the charge against Campbell, because the Attorney General thought that there was not enough evidence to secure a conviction. But in India one need not bother about evidence. If the ordinary law does not suffice, a special ordinance can always be issued. In a country where such an unconstitutional situation obtains, the Labour Government demanded strictly "lawful activities" on the part of the nationalists.

The Labour Government has gone; but the men who constituted the Labour Cabinet still dominate the British Labour Party. Therefore this story of MacDonald's parting kick to India is very instructive to the British proletariat. It reveals what a monstrous lie is the doctrine of self-determination, as indeed is any other doctrine of the Second International.