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War efforts and the key industries of India

THE rapid rise to power of countries organised in deadly earnest has been the marvel of the last decade; and the technique of warfare developed in these countries has hardly been less revolutionary than the technique of the organisation of the State. The democratic governments could only look wistfully at this war preparation of the totalitarian States, for they could not secure the whole-hearted co-operation of all sections of the people in counter-preparation until they could rouse popular enthusiasm with the slogan 'our country is in danger'. In India, the most important political party professed faith in complete non-violence; and the other parties have been reluctant to lend their support to additional military expenditure on the ground that so long as India remains a dependency and her sons have no effective voice in military administration, defence of India is an imperial problem of Great

Britain and that Indian defence forces are no concern of the people of India. The fateful events that have followed the German conquest of the small neutral nations of Western Europe and the complete collapse of France have rudely awakened us to the danger which the victory of totalitarian States exposes us to; and there has developed a genuine interest in the war-efforts of the country. Uninformed criticism has even swung to the opposite extreme. People are not wanting who question the adequacy of a war-effort which is intended to expand the army of this vast country by 130,000 men, when during 1914-18 nearly a million combatants were sent overseas from India. This arises from a failure to appreciate how completely 1940-41 differs from 1914-18

Nor has Indian war effort reached a stage when the ability to build aeroplanes and automobiles is considered essential. It is in these spheres, that the difference between war effort as it is and war effort as it should be, is most glaring. The Defence Department even a few months ago, was of the opinion that it was quite useless for the purposes of the present war to imagine the possibility of developments in these directions. Thanks, however, to the keen interest and the financial assistance of the Mysore State. Mr Walchand Hirachand is putting up an Aircraft Factory in the neighbourhood of Bangalore. The American technicians in charge hope to produce aeroplanes from this factory in six months. The scheme for establishing an Automobile Industry

in Bombay has not made much headway even though the project was mooted by Sir M. Visvesvaraya in 1935, and a detailed report submitted in April 1936. It was intended to manufacture 11,000 vehicles every year in a factory with a capital outlay of $2\frac{1}{4}$ crores of rupees. The Indian Industrialists are obsessed with the fear that the manufacture of motor vehicles is too difficult to be undertaken by Indian workmen in the near future. They forget however, that the thought and skill required in manufacture have been transferred from workmen to automatic machines. Russia started the manufacture of motor vehicles about 7 years ago and produced 200,000 vehicles in 1938. Immediately on the declaration of the war, the Australian Government passed a Motor Vehicle Bounty Act, which provided for a bounty of $1\frac{1}{2}$ million pounds for the first 60,000 automobiles manufactured in this country. The Government of India are not yet satisfied that the proposals for a motor car industry would be conducive to war effort. . . . They say that great responsibilities and small minds go ill together; there is no lack of complications in Eastern Asia; and the people of India hope that in these vital matters of key industries, the decisions of the Government of India will be guided by a national outlook and by a bold, constructive and vigorous programme which will make the defences of India as invulnerable as is humanly possible.

J. C. GHOSH