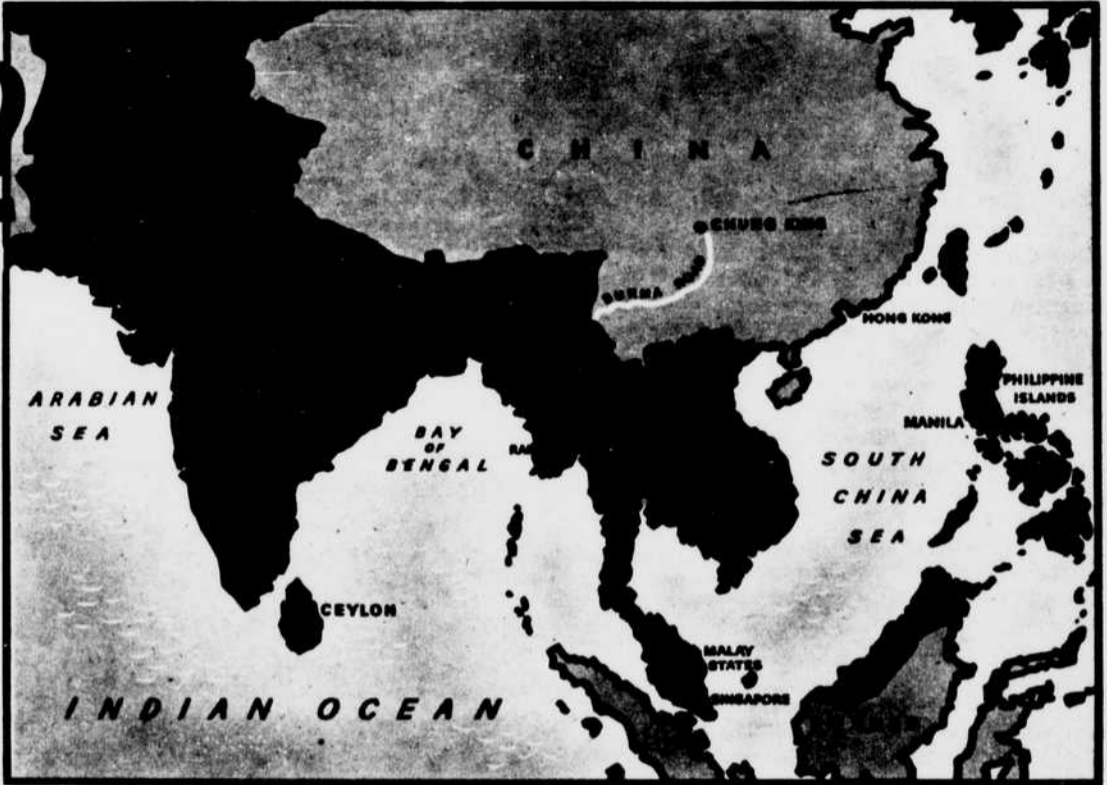


COUNT ON INDIA?



With U. S. planes, ships and troops fighting all over southeast Asia, this question has a vital meaning for Americans

by **Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai**

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as told to **HENRY C. WOLFE**

Italians. When the Japanese attacked Hong Kong last December, Indian soldiers manned the pillboxes along the waterfront and stood off onslaught after onslaught of Nippon's best shock troops.

In the two years that the war has raged in Europe, India's army has not only been expanded, it has been modernized. Its soldiers are equipped with the latest tools of mechanized war — and trained to use them. We only wish we had more, and yet more, of these tools.

But perhaps even more important than India's modern army are its resources for producing the materials of modern war.

Though ocean lanes from America and England have grown so long and perilous, India still stands as a mighty arsenal for the democracies on the Far Eastern front.

Temples and Steel Mills

THIS statement, I find, comes as a surprise to many Americans. They think of India as a land of great temples, of majestic mountains and diverse, picturesque peoples. Few realize that it is also one of the eight leading industrial countries of the world. It has huge deposits of iron ore — among the richest in Asia. It has the greatest single steel works in the entire British Commonwealth — and the Indian steel industry can turn out more than 1,000,000 tons of finished steel a year. Its factories are converting this steel, on the spot, into artillery, machine guns, rifles, shells and accessories for armored cars, tanks and airplanes.

The same story is true in other fields. From its own cotton, India is producing most of the cloth for the uniforms of the British Tropical Army. Indian factories are turning out tires

made from Indian rubber. Shipyards are building naval vessels. Aluminum plants are working at top speed. Our manganese, oil, hides and jute help keep democracy's industrial mechanism going. We raise a million tons of wheat, and that, with our rice, maize, millet and tea help feed the soldiers and civilians of the united nations.

These cogs for the wheels of war are being produced right next door to the combat. They need not be shipped halfway around the world. Thus precious ocean tonnage is saved for other essential war shipping.

You can see from the above map why India's geographical position is so vitally important in the Pacific conflict. India — on the threshold of the Burma Road (the gateway to China), on the sea lanes from the west to Singapore, a neighbor of the Netherlands East Indies — occupies a location of immeasurable strategic value.

It is the seat of the Eastern Supply Council, which, from Delhi, co-ordinates all British Empire supplies for the Middle East and the Far East — providing not only for the armies of India, but also for the fighting forces of Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

So much for our man power and resources. What of our morale?

It is true that our country is large and complex, and, in the political field, there is much debate as to India's future status. Nearly all groups feel that India is entitled to order her own affairs, both internal and external. Some visualize India as a Dominion within the British Commonwealth of Nations. Others, like Mahatma Gandhi and his adherents, want complete independence, and want it now.

"Give India her independence," demand Gandhi's followers,

"and we may support Britain's war effort against the Axis."

But this is India's own family argument. Whatever shades of opinion there may be on this debate, nowhere is there any feeling that India stands to gain anything by playing Japan's game. We have seen what happened in Korea, in Formosa, in Manchuria, in China, and, now, in the Philippines. We know that under a victorious Japan our people would lose all hope of freedom — and become the slaves of brutal and arrogant tyrants.

The Japs Wee India

BY RADIO broadcasts, by every other type of propaganda, the Japanese have tried to rally the Indians to their "Asia for the Asiatics" campaign against the white man. They have sought to lure us into their "greater East Asia co-prosperity sphere."

But for some time now the great majority of the Indian people have distrusted the "Prussians of the East." When the Japanese invaded China in 1937, we Indians were outraged. The Indian National Congress declared a boycott against Japanese goods — and this boycott has continued down to the present day. Even then we knew that Japan would have to be stopped, and we were ready to do our part to stop her.

We are ready now. From the battlefields of Libya to the beach heads in the South China Sea, India's warriors are in the forefront of the struggle to defeat the Axis. The Sikh suicide defenders of Hong Kong stirred the world with their salutation: "Sat Shiri Akal" (Truth Is Eternal). This, remember, is the watchword of an old people and an old country that are very young today. For India this is an all-out fight. Her three hundred and ninety millions are in it for the duration.

The End



SUICIDE TROOPS wrote an epic of Indian heroism in their Hong Kong stand



CRACK Punjabi desert fighters point a V for Victory trench at the Axis