

Booklet for Red Books Day 2024



**D.D. Kosambi on Hunger,
Imperialism, and World Peace**

With an Introduction by Jesse Olsavsky



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SANKRITYAYAN KOSAMBI STUDY CIRCLE

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BULLETIN

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PEKING, CHINA

Cable Address
PEACECON

THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE
for
THE PEACE CONFERENCE OF THE ASIAN AND PACIFIC REGIONS

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FOR PEACE IN ASIA & THE PACIFIC, PEACE IN THE WORLD
AT THE PEKING PREPARATORY CONFERENCE FOR THE PEACE
CONFERENCE OF THE ASIAN & PACIFIC REGIONS

By Prof. D.D. Kosambi

(Prof. D.D. Kosambi, famous scientist and Vice President of the All India Peace Council and leader of the Indian Delegation to the Preparatory Conference held from June 3 to 6 at Peking, has written an article on the Preparatory Conference for the Indian public after his return. It was widely published in a number of newspapers all over India.)

25-33-42

Though scheduled for May 28-31, the Preparatory Conference for a Peace Conference of the Asian and Pacific Regions began on June 3rd. The delay was occasioned by Kuo Mo-jo's severe illness, and the late arrival of many delegates, especially those from Latin America.

At the opening, twenty countries were represented, besides two special representatives of the World Peace Council Secretariat, Messrs. P.Goulyayev and John Darr. Of course, several other delegates were members of the WPC, and even of its Bureau. However the conference was not under the auspices of the WPC, so that the special representatives helped in a consultative capacity as individuals, with voice and vote, but no directives from the world movement.

Mr. Thornton, the Australian representative of the regional liaison office of the WFTU was also at the table. Besides these delegates there were many observers without voice or vote, who were admitted to the open sessions.

The formal opening was most impressive. The largest reception room of the Peking hotel was converted into a special assembly hall, with a large oval table which seated the delegations in alphabetical order of countries each with its name card in its own language and Chinese, as well as its national flag in silk.

The only decoration on the wall was a large reproduction of Picasso's dove of peace; however, on the final day, there appeared on the opposite wall a great black and white reproduction of Diego Rivera's tremendous painting in which the woes of the common people are represented in a world gripped by increasing war tension, fighting in Korea, Malaya, Viet Nam, oppression of racial, national minorities, and shooting of workers; at the left, the leaders of China and the USSR offer the Five Power Pact to obdurate France, USA, and Britain. These two pictures were the most appropriate background for any real deliberations on peace.

The delegates observed the seriousness of their task from the very outset. In his speech opening the conference and welcoming the delegates Kuo Mo-jo pointed to the serious position in Asia, the crucial position of Asia and the Pacific region in the world peace problem, the need for solidarity between the peoples of

**Bulletin of the Preparatory Committee for the Peking Peace Conference (1952)
featuring Kosambi's reportage**

Introduction

Jesse Olsavsky¹

The “exasperating essays” presented here are the timely but neglected reflections on peace by D.D. Kosambi (1907-1966), one of the great polymaths of the twentieth century. Kosambi was born in Portuguese-occupied Goa. His father was a Gandhian and reputed scholar of Pali, who taught at universities in India and the USA, as well as for a stint at Leningrad University in the USSR. Kosambi spent his formative years in the USA (his father had a teaching post at Harvard), where he studied at a Latin grammar school and then mathematics at Harvard. He developed a knack for languages, both European and non-European. Snubbed of the opportunity for post-graduate study — due, Kosambi believed, to “being interested in too many things, not to speak of my uncouth appearance, rude manners and the rest” — Kosambi returned to India. He taught and researched mathematics at Ferguson College (Pune), Aligarh University, and finally (after independence) at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR). His boss there was none other than Homi J. Bhabha, the famed nuclear physicist with whom Kosambi would have many disagreements. Despite being a world-renowned mathematician in his time, Kosambi is best known today for his work as a historian who brought the “scientific” methods of Marxism to the study of ancient India. Kosambi’s work, according to Romila Thapar, contemporary India’s most distinguished historian, was a “paradigm shift,” a radical

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rupture from the colonialist interpretations of Indian history inaugurated by James Mill. Kosambi, above all else, lived the life of a scientist, including scientist of history. These aspects of Kosambi's life have been well studied by scholars much more qualified to do so than myself. Less studied is the brief but significant moment in the 1950s, when Kosambi was also a globetrotting activist in the cause of world peace. His neglected writings on peace and imperialism are, to my knowledge, assembled here together for the very first time.

Kosambi's peace activism was, in many respects, the most unique aspect of his illustrious career. Kosambi was a Marxist, but not a revolutionary. His home was the laboratory, or the archaeological excursion, not the public forum. He wrote scientific papers in such languages as French, English, and German, and was an eminent translator of Sanskrit poetry. But he was a poor public speaker in both Marathi and English (which he spoke with a distinct American accent). He got easily impatient with people who did not immediately get his point. Once, when some students and activists came uninvited to his home to discuss matters of war and peace, Kosambi's angry pet dog gave them a fright. "Look," Kosambi replied, "I stand for peace but my dog does not stand for peace. So next time take an appointment." Yet despite totally lacking the temperament of the agitator, Kosambi pushed himself hard to become a notorious voice for peace at home and abroad. He spoke on peace to white collar workers, trade unionists, mill-workers, and students, painstakingly preparing his lectures beforehand. He spoke at numerous international meetings of the 1950s World Peace Movement, the texts of which appear here. Where charisma lacked, Kosambi made up for it with scientific precision. A

Russian friend, I.D. Serebryakov² said of Kosambi: “He is extremely precise in his estimations of the overall capacity of the US nuclear arsenals that threaten not only to turn our planet into a lifeless radioactive desert but to destroy it as a cosmic body. The scholar calculates how many schools, hospitals, houses, libraries and centres of science and culture could be built if swords be beaten into ploughshares.” His scientific pacifism garnered unwanted attention. The CIA wrote down notes on his international speeches. The US congressional Committee on Un-American Activities mentioned Kosambi in their belligerent 1951 *Report on the Communist “Peace” Offensive*. The latter document alleged, in rather delusional, conspiratorial language, that all activists in the World Peace Movement, Kosambi included, were part of a dangerous Soviet-dictated “campaign to disarm and defeat the United States.”

In the 1950s, the world was very much at war. After a massive Civil War in China, which ended in communist victory, the West recognized Taiwan as the representative of all China at the UN. Kosambi himself singled out the non-recognition of China, and the use of Taiwan as a “base for operations against China,” to be among the gravest threats to world peace (34). Imperialist aggression against communism further broke out into open war in Greece and in Korea. The Nakba³ in Palestine had already occurred, which Kosambi alludes to (16). The Dutch fought a bloody war to keep Indonesia, the French fought to keep Indochina, and later Algeria. The US globalized its networks of military bases to contain communism and Third

² Igor Dmitrievich Serebryakov was a Soviet lexicographer and translator who also took active interest in ancient Indian history. He along with Igor Rabinovich compiled the first Punjabi-Russian Dictionary.

³ Nakba, which means “catastrophe” in Arabic, refers to the forced displacement of Palestinians en masse, during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war.

World Nationalism, and, in a sense, to fill in the vacuum caused by dying colonialism. US bases were another thing Kosambi singled out as among the gravest threats to global peace. The nuclear arms race, between the US and the Soviets, was well underway, and soon Kosambi's own India would try and enter the fray. Throughout the 50s, the period of Kosambi's activism, millions died as a result of war, overwhelmingly in the Global South. Millions more died of hunger or malnourishment too, and Kosambi stresses repeatedly throughout his peace writings that hunger too is a kind of war — a class war — against all of humanity.

There were three internationalist responses to the renewed threat of world war, of which the Peace Movement was one. First was the Soviet Union's efforts to build a European collective security infrastructure, later followed by the policy of "peaceful coexistence." As Kosambi proudly notes, the Soviet Union had been born directly out of the Russian people's struggle to oppose the First World War (18). The second response was the 1955 Bandung Conference, with its stance of non-alignment in the Cold War. The Peace Movement, led by the World Peace Council (WPC), was the third response. The WPC demanded nuclear disarmament, collective security for Europe, democracy (broadly conceived), and decolonization as the necessary precondition for peace. The movement held numerous international meetings in such cities as New York (1949), Paris (1949), and Vienna (1952), and Helsinki (1955). China held its own independent peace conference (1952), under the auspices of the China Peace Council, which Kosambi attended. The movement attracted trade unions and other progressive organizations. The 1952 China peace conference, for instance, had a particularly strong showing from the Women's International

Democratic Federation. Numerous artists and intellectuals, such as the philosopher Jean Paul Sartre, participated in WPC events, the most active of whom was the African American scholar W.E.B. Du Bois. Though heavily backed by the Soviets, the World Peace Council cannot be reduced to a mere arm of Soviet foreign policy. It brought together pacifists of many political and religious persuasions. It brought too, Kosambi, whose criticisms of Soviet Marxism and Indology were a matter of public record. Though a movement of rather large scope, the Peace Movement lost momentum by the end of the decade, with the Soviet intervention in Hungary, the Sino-Soviet split, and the India-China War. Anti-war movements would continually re-emerge throughout the Cold War, but in a far less centrally-organized form.

What brought Kosambi to the Peace Movement, and not some other movement? Though he admired Gandhi, though his father had been a Gandhian and practicing Buddhist, Kosambi was no Gandhian pacifist. He was a voracious meat eater, and fond of hunting, a pastime he seems to have picked up in America. Peace, instead, was simply integral to his praxis as a scientist. In the laboratory setting itself, Kosambi openly opposed India investing in atomic energy research, putting him in direct opposition to his boss at the Tata Institute, the nuclear physicist Bhabha. Bhabha believed that nuclear energy had to be harnessed by India to compete militarily with China. Kosambi, on the other hand, believed that India's money "could have been much better utilized in harnessing the decidedly more abundant solar energy, which only blasts the country over eight months or more of the year." A rather prophetic stance, but one for which he had to leave his job at the Tata Institute in 1962. Scientific

rationality, Kosambi argued, had been a weapon of the bourgeoisie in its economic clash with feudalism. But as capitalism degenerated into imperialism, so science became subordinated to the demands of war. At a certain point, capitalism and science would become antithetical. Science, Kosambi asserted, required “broad cooperation and pooling of knowledge” across nations; war divided nations (21). The laboratory needed skilled personnel, as well as independence from politics; war put “third-raters in control to bring big business monopoly to the laboratory” (21). As Kosambi put it in philosophical terms, building on Engels: “Freedom is the recognition of necessity; science is the investigation, the analysis, the cognition of necessity. Science and freedom always march together. The war mentality which destroys freedom must necessarily destroy science” (21). No peace, no science. Kosambi stands out as among the first people to critique what became known, by 1961, as the “military-industrial complex,” that is, the new form of society arisen during the Cold War in which academia and industry are substantially subservient to the demands and funds coming from the military sector.

Whereas many activists in the World Peace Council desired, above all, a pan-European peace, Kosambi, in his peace writings, postured himself as a Pan-Asian pacifist. At the New York Peace Conference, he remarked “I suffer from the incurable delusion that Asia really exists” (11). Kosambi’s “Asia” was not a Western racial construct; nor was it the space that Japan sought to “liberate” from Western imperialism through conquest. Nor was Asia a mode of production. Kosambi was a critic of the “Asiatic mode of production,” and he denounced all those ignorant scholars (like Wittfogel) who abstracted from it sweeping theories of “Oriental despotism.” Asia for

Kosambi was a place of shared histories. Shared modern histories of fighting colonialism, hunger, landlordism, and the burdens of old, but ever-morphing, hierarchies. But there was also a shared pre-colonial history of close commercial, philosophical, and religious connections, most powerfully manifested through Buddhism. Indian thinkers, from the poet Tagore to the scholar P.C. Bagchi, began re-invoking these ancient ties, particularly between India and China, throughout the period of decolonization. The modern manifestation of these ties came in the 1950s, with the “Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai” moment in Indian foreign policy, embodied in the jointly declared Sino-Indian “Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence” (1954). The moment of India-China friendship enthused Kosambi greatly. “The Chou-Nehru Five Principles can be adopted by every nation,” Kosambi declared (39).

In tune with the times, Kosambi’s Pan-Asian solidarity focused on China-India, ancient and modern. His engagements with China began with the 1952 Asian Peace Conference in Beijing. After thirty years of war, China wanted peace to build a new socialist society. Impressed by what he saw in China, Kosambi returned numerous times. He worked with Chinese academics to obtain photocopied Tibetan translations of Indian texts. He advised the Chinese government on statistic-gathering methods for agricultural and industrial production (advice that later seems to have gone unheeded). Even if China and India shared a great deal, China could not help but be the other of India in Kosambi’s imagination. China had a socialist revolution, smashing landlordism, whereas India had not. China was modernizing, eliminating literacy, and revolutionizing living standards much more swiftly than India. As Kosambi made clear, especially in an

essay on the Chinese revolution, in his book *Exasperating Essays*, this difference was an opportunity, not an unbridgeable Cold-War divide between capitalism and socialism. India had once taught China; China could now teach India. Kosambi must have been devastated by the 1962 war between China and India, which permanently ended the era of India-China friendship. Making things worse, the government of Nehru kept close watch on Kosambi's mail, due to his connections to China.

Apart from being explorations in Marxism, pacifism, and Pan-Asian solidarity, the texts presented here are significant for their vigorous denunciations of the “outworn colonial system” (16). Kosambi argued, following Lenin, that imperialism was a means of externalizing domestic class wars in the West into an international class war between metropolises and colonies. “All other wars of today stem from attempts to turn it [i.e. class struggle] outward,” he noted (20). Imperialism was the preeminent maker of war between nations, and thus decolonization the preeminent pre-condition for peace. As Kosambi precisely elaborated, the elimination of colonialism eliminates the tension between imperialist powers and subject peoples as well as the tensions between rival imperialist powers. Always logically consistent, Kosambi grasped fully that his own definition of peace did not preclude war: “The peace movement cannot deny to any people the right to revolution (including counter-revolution), nor even the right to wage civil war. It can only demand that no nation's armed forces should go into action upon foreign territory” (22). Pacifism did not necessarily preclude sympathy for anti-colonial liberation wars.

Finally, when it came to American imperialism in particular, Kosambi was at his sharpest. He knew American society well, and even faced marginalization there from its racism. As mentioned above, he critiqued the military-industrial complex, of which the US played the guiding role. The texts printed here denounce US military interventions in Korea and in Guatemala, not to mention the US backing of Chiang Kai-Shek's dictatorship. But more than that, Kosambi saw as the greatest long-term threat to world peace the building up of aggressive military blocs, especially the US-led North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the global expansion of US military bases. Of the military blocs, Kosambi's solution is simple: "Non-aggression pacts, multilateral regional pacts based on the Five Principles must replace military agreements" (39). Of American bases, Kosambi was absolutely clear: "All bases on foreign soil are to be evacuated without delay" (39). Bases were weapons of offense, not defense. They did not make Americans safer, nor anyone else for that matter. They undermined the sovereignty of host nations, posed security threats to rival nations, and made the US a virtual subcontractor of other nations' foreign policies. As Kosambi asserted: "We can assure the peoples of the world that demands for advanced bases are a method of colonial adventure" (36). Peace would only come through decolonization; but meaningful decolonization would only come about, Kosambi maintained, with the removal of all US bases residing outside its own borders.

In sum, the pieces printed below are texts of their time, not ours. They are lesser-known documents penned and proclaimed by one of the great minds of the last century. These texts ought to be treated as documents of merely literary and historical interest. They show, quite simply, that Kosambi's

intense commitment to peace was fundamentally shaped by his practice as a scientist. His praxis of peace, in turn, shaped his activities as a Pan-Asian anti-colonial Marxist. If these essays now appear “relevant” we should feel despondent, not delighted. What might remain “relevant” in these brilliant texts about war and imperialism are merely the things that have not changed.

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Hunger⁴

I have the honor and you have the misfortune to have me as the sole delegate from Asia. Alas, I suffer from an incurable delusion that Asia really exists, that it constitutes a rather large and important part of the world with many millions of population and many millennia of history. Permit me to apologize in advance if I should happen to introduce a slight note of discord into this magnificent Conference.

May I say at once that the entire Conference seems to be based on just one fear, the fear of a possible atomic and bacteriological war between the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. How true, how real that fear is, I cannot say. The U.S.A. is well represented, and so is the U.S.S.R. I shall stand on the sidelines and observe.

Of course, my country also has fissionable materials which my Institute⁵ handles. We have thorium and beryllium upon which more powerful fellow members of the United Nations have already cast envious eyes, so far without success. But let me confess never to having split an atom; I have never split anything smaller than an infinitive. I have heard the name of Professor Einstein mentioned, and I honor him, but may I point out that we in Asia know something of atomic energy? It was, to his lasting regret, the Japanese scientist Yukawa who first predicted the meson and worked

⁴ 'Hunger' in Daniel S. Gillmor (ed), *Speaking of Peace: An edited report of the Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace, New York, March, 25, 26, and 27, 1949 under the auspices of National Council of the Arts, Sciences and Professions.*

⁵ The Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR), whose founder director was the nuclear physicist Homi J. Bhabha.

out these important forces. My colleague and director, Bhabha, then developed the Cascade theory which gave further impetus toward the creation of the atom bomb, a result which he never could have visualized.

As a mathematician of some sort, I am used to defining my terms, and inasmuch as I have considerable difficulty in a foreign language, as you observe, it may be well for you to listen to my definitions or rather not my definitions, but definitions I learned elsewhere:

War is a mechanism for imposing one's will by violence upon the enemy. This is not my definition; you will find it on the second page of Clausewitz's "Von Kriege".⁶ Violence, I might add on my own, is any means of causing death and distress.

Democracy is a government of the people, for the people, by the people. I learned this definition from an American named Abraham Lincoln, who had been dead for some years. I hope I need not explain his ideas for the descendants of his contemporaries.

Employing these definitions, I am forced to the inevitable conclusion that, while talking about peace at this luxurious American Conference, you are already engaged in waging war on a considerable part of the world's population and waging war against democracy. Democracy means the government of the people who live in a given country, not people of a different size, shape, color, language, or means of production. Nor does it mean government by people who come from thousands of miles away. Democracy cannot be made to mean that a certain advisory mission of Americans should dictate conditions to the Greek people, nor that a French

⁶ Carl von Clausewitz was a Prussian general and military theorist. His most notable work, *Von Kriege* (1830) or *On War*, is considered a seminal treatise on military strategy and modern warfare.

military commission dictate terms to Indo-China, nor that a Dutch army, trained in North Carolina to be paratroopers somewhere in Europe, should then be used to capture the entire legally elected government of Indonesia. That is not my idea of democracy, though it may be yours.

Now, this war in which you are engaged is being waged violently even apart from the bullets and the other weapons that may be supplied ultimately from this country. There is one weapon which you have not thought of as a weapon at all. It is not the presence of it that makes for terror and fear and death; it is the absence of it. That weapon is food.

The countries from which I come suffer from hunger. I am a mathematician but that does not mean that I do not know what it is to have gone hungry. I hope you never have that experience, but hunger for a day is something else. Hunger for generations twists and warps and corrodes the mind and the soul of human beings. They no longer remain human. You see, I do not fear death by shooting. I have seen a good deal of this in our own fight for democracy. After all, if you shoot a bullet or drop a bomb on a man, you only shorten his life by a few years. All of us are not immortal in any sense of the word. We shall all die sooner or later. A bullet is a quicker death than many other forms. Even the atomic bomb, even the after-effects of the atomic bomb should be no more horrible than year after year, generation after generation having your mind filled with no other thought than that of food. You shorten these people's lives just as effectively; you sentence them to death just as effectively; you increase the incidence of bacteriological warfare in that sense by increasing epidemics, by increasing disease, by causing deformity of the body and the mind.

When I came to your country from mine, I flew over a great stretch of starving Asia in perfectly modern airplanes. One of the first things I heard, on a visit to the countryside in Massachusetts, was that comparatively recently a million bags of potatoes had been dumped into the ocean rather than feeding it to the livestock. Tons of grain were being fed to livestock rather than being exported, lest export prices fall. Moreover, the grain, after being distributed, was then followed by a succession of inspectors who saw to it that even inside the U.S.A. the livestock ate the grain and not the people feeding it to them.

Food can also be a terrible weapon. It has been asked: Why should not the atomic bomb stockpile be destroyed? May I ask why should the stockpile of food be destroyed when it can be far more effective in the cause of peace?

Let me add one word about democracy. I saw the Indian struggle for democracy from within. My father took a distinguished part, and on a much smaller scale I also did my humble share. But during that fight for democracy, I saw that food could be a weapon. Three and a half million people in Bengal starved while the grain that they cultivated was being eaten by people in other parts of the world. They starved while some of it was taken by their own brothers and held for an exorbitant price, a rise of 30 times which they could not afford to pay.

At that time, I saw my own students being shot in the streets of Poona, while their classmates of a year earlier were fighting for the causes of democracy in Africa and in Europe. It seems to me, therefore, that I should call assiduously this fact to your attention: You are using a far more terrible means of warfare than the bacteriological or the atomic. You are

using it against the newly-born democracies of a fairly important part of the world, Asia, an area of the globe, which you would do well to bring into closer harmony with your partial and rather distorted point of view, your “global point of view”.

Source: Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace Report, March 1949. Courtesy: W. E. B. Du Bois Papers, Robert S. Cox Special Collections and University Archives Research Center, UMass Amherst Libraries.

Imperialism and Peace⁷

We do not have, today, the peace yearned for by millions all over the world. In Korea we see a full-scale modern war waged relentlessly against an entire nation whose one wish, for centuries, has been unity, with independence from foreign aggression. In Malaya and Indo-China two decaying imperial powers struggle desperately to maintain the privileges of an outworn colonial system over the opposition of people who will no longer be denied freedom. Military operations in Greece, Indonesia, Kashmir, Palestine, have shown us for five years other facets of the same malignant activity.

Yet the supporters of peace have a power which can stop this violence and bloodshed. For all these wars and acts of aggression — even the war in Korea — have been waged in the name of establishing peace. At first, we were given various mutually contradictory reasons why the Koreans were to be saved from themselves. Then we were told that General MacArthur⁸ meant to supply the aggressive leadership which is all that Asiatics can appreciate. He seems to think that we Asiatics will naturally appreciate saturation bombing of peaceful villages, destruction of schools and hospitals, savage reprisals against civilians and prisoners of war. But this is an error. What we do appreciate is that his utterances show quite clearly who is the real aggressor in Korea. We Asiatics also belong to the human

⁷ D.D. Kosambi, *Exasperating Essays: Exercises in the Dialectical Method* (New Delhi, 1957).

⁸ Douglas MacArthur was a five-star general in the US armed forces who served in the two World Wars and the Korean War (1950-53).

race; we also are made of flesh and blood; we tread the same earth, breathe the same air.

The peace we want means true democracy. The experience of millennia has shown us that no other kind of peace will last. No man shall claim to be another's master whether by divine right, the right of birth, the right of armed conquest, or the right vested in accumulated private property. Such rights can only be exercised by fraud and violence against the vast majority of the people, by destroying the very foundations of peace, namely, truth and justice. The lowest in the land must raise himself to full stature as an individual member of a great society. He must exercise in full, by actual participation in governing himself and others, his right to receive according to his needs, his duty to contribute according to his ability. Formal recourse to the ballot-box for a periodic but ineffective change of masters will not suffice.

The stale proclamations of all imperialisms, from Rome to the present day, have again been proved false in the British, French, and Dutch empires. The people of China rejected, in favour of democracy, the aggressive leadership of Chiang Kai-shek, who was so amply supplied with foreign arms and money. But the only lesson imperialism can draw from these rebuffs is that puppets are unreliable, that open intervention is a far better road to conquest — provided the other side is poorly armed. The Pax Romana and the Pax Britannica should now be replaced by a dollar peace, the Pax Americana. Tacitus gave a candid opinion of a contemporary Roman emperor: “He made a desert and called it peace.” A modern historian might say of Hitler: “He waged total war and called it peace.”

This kind of 'peace' did not succeed in Europe, nor will it in any other part of the world.

Let us trace this crazy logic to its source. The issue of peace or war does not depend upon a single individual who is ostensibly at the helm of a nation, but upon the dominant class which really holds the power. We are all convinced of the late President Franklin D. Roosevelt's liberalism and sincere desire for world peace. Yet in attempting to 'quarantine the aggressor' in Spain, he only helped to destroy the democratic victims of fascist aggression. Hitler's advance into Czechoslovakia went unchecked, as did Mussolini's into Abyssinia, Japan's into China. We can trace this kind of aggression right back to World War I and its aftermath, to the grim intervention against the young Soviet Union which had sounded the call for peace at its very birth. There is indeed a broad continuity of policy against peace and against democracy. This undercurrent has never changed its direction, no matter what appears on the surface. Leaders like Mr. Churchill just carry out the interests of the dominant class and would get nowhere without its backing; they are merely a symptom, not the main cause.

Look at another aspect of this underlying policy. Ploughing cotton back into the soil, burning up or dumping millions of tons of food into the ocean were desperation measures introduced at the beginning of Roosevelt's New Deal. Instead of changing the ownership of the means of production, or designing a better distribution mechanism, these transitional measures rapidly became a permanent feature of the American way of life. The United States government began regularly to pay subsidies to produce food which was then destroyed to keep prices up. Up to 1950, American farmers

were paid by their government to destroy mountainous heaps of potatoes and to feed to livestock wheat produced by the most modern farming technique; at the same time, Canadian wheat was being imported into the United States because, even after paying the protective tariff, it was cheaper than the subsidized American product. This insane economic system shows exactly the same kind of twisted logic as that of modern imperialism which wages war in the name of peace and calls any move toward, peace an act of warlike aggression, which bombs people indiscriminately to save them from Communism.

The crooked roots of imperialism lie deep in the need for profits and ever more profits — for the benefit of a few monopolists. The ‘American way of life’ did not solve the world problem of the great depression of 1929-33. In the United States this was solved by World War II. But only for a time. Korea shows that the next step is to start a new war to stave off another depression. The one lesson of the last depression which stuck is that profits can be kept up by creating shortages where they do not and need not exist. War materials are produced for destruction. Producing them restricts consumer goods, which increases profits in double ratio. Any logic that proves the necessity of war is the correct logic for imperialism and for Big Business, which now go hand in hand. Mere contradictions do not matter for this sort of lunatic thinking where production of food is no longer the method of raising man above the animals, but merely a way of making profit while millions starve.

Let us now consider the deeper fact that food is itself a weapon — a negative weapon, but no less deadly than the atom bomb or bacteriological warfare. A bomb or a bullet shortens a man's life. The lack of proper

nourishment also shortens a man's expectation of life by a calculable number of years, even when there is no actual famine or death by starvation. Deprive a man of food and you make him prey not only to hunger but to disease; do it year after year, generation after generation, and you produce a race whose minds and bodies are stunted, tortured, warped, deformed. You produce monstrous superstitions, twisted social systems. Destroying stockpiles of food is the same kind of action as building up stockpiles of atom-bombs.

But the war waged by means of food is different in one very important respect from national and colonial aggression. It is war against the whole of humanity except that tiny portion to whom food is a negligibly small item of expenditure, war also against millions of American workers. In a word, it is class war, and all other wars of today stem from attempts to turn it outward. Even the Romans knew that the safest way to avoid inner conflict, to quiet the demands of their own citizens, was to attempt new conquests.

Quite apart from the destructiveness of total war, the crooked logic of Big Business and warmongers is fatal to the clear thinking needed for science. The arguments that modern science originates with the bourgeoisie, that the enormous funds devoted to war research are a great stimulus to science, are vicious. The scientific outlook came into being when the bourgeoisie was a new progressive class, struggling for power against feudal and clerical reaction. Science is cumulative, as is large-scale mechanized production which congeals the result of human labour and technical skill in increasingly large and more efficient machines. But for modern capitalists, a class in decay, the findings of science (apart from

profit-making techniques) have become dangerous; and so, it becomes necessary for them to coerce the scientist, to restrict his activity. That is one reason for vast expenditure on secret atomic research, for putting third-raters in control to bring big-business monopoly to the laboratory. The broad co-operation and pooling of knowledge which made scientific progress so rapid is destroyed. Finally, the individual scientist is openly and brutally enslaved for political reasons. Science cannot flourish behind barbed wire, no matter how much money the war offices may pay to 'loyal' mediocrities. Freedom is the recognition of necessity; science is the investigation, the analysis, the cognition of necessity. Science and freedom always march together. The war mentality which destroys freedom must necessarily destroy science.

The scientist by himself can neither start nor stop a war. Modern war has to be fought by millions in uniform and greater numbers in fields and factories. But a scientific analysis of the causes of war, if convincing to the people at large, could be an effective as well as a democratic force for peace. We have to make it clear to the common people of the world that any aggression anywhere is, in the last analysis, war against them. We have to tell them not to be misled by the familiar but insidious whisper: "Things were better when we had a war." This is just like a criminal drug peddler saying to his victim: "See how much better it was for you when you had the drug than when you sobered up afterwards. Buy another dose." The real problem is how to straighten out our thinking and to change our economy, to transfer control of all production to society as a whole. Only then can we have real democracy and lasting peace.

It must be understood quite clearly that the war between nations, World War III, is not inevitable and can be stopped by pressure of public opinion. The inner conflict, the class war, on the other hand, must be settled within each country without foreign armed intervention. The peace movement cannot deny to any people the right to revolution (including counter-revolution), nor even the right to wage civil war. It can only demand that no nation's armed forces should go into action upon foreign territory. That is aggression even when done under cover of 'defence', restoration of law and order, or a forced vote in the United Nations: The purpose of the United Nations was to settle all international differences without war, not to provide a joint flag for the ancient imperialist 'police actions'. If unchecked, such an adventure is a clear invitation to the aggressor to initiate the next world war as can be seen by the history of appeasement during the 1930's.

But there is one important difference between that period and the present. There were then large powers such as the British Empire and the United States which could assume a position of formal neutrality while fascism was being built up as a military and political counterpoise to Communism. Even this formal neutrality is impossible today; only mass action by the common people of the world remains as the bulwark of peace.

Colonial liberation greatly promotes world peace because it wipes out the great tension between the imperial power and the subject people, and because it does away with the outcry for colonies by the 'have-not' nations of the West. The previous exploiting nation will actually profit, for it would logically be the best source of help for the liberated colony to develop its own resources on a free and equal basis. This is because of

long contact, cultural influences, and local knowledge. The loss to the small group of people who monopolized colonial profits and made money out of armaments would be negligible as compared to the national savings in armaments and the total profit by the new trade. The sole condition for all these mutual benefits is that liberation should take place before the colonial population is enraged beyond all limits. The British seem to have learned this lesson (except in places like Kenya where there is virtually no strong native bourgeoisie), whereas the French show by their behaviour in Algeria that the lesson of Vietnam has not yet gone home.

Source: *Monthly Review*, (New York) 3, 1951, pp. 45-59. Courtesy, Marxists Internet Archive.

Asian Peace, Chinese Prosperity⁹

Though scheduled for May 28-31, the Preparatory Conference for a Peace Conference of the Asian and Pacific Regions began on June 3rd. The delay was occasioned by Kuo Mo-jo's¹⁰ severe illness, and the late arrival of many delegates, especially those from Latin America.

At the opening, twenty countries were represented, besides two special representatives of the World Peace Council Secretariat, Messrs. P. Goulyayev and John Darr. Of course, several other delegates were members of the WPC, and even of its Bureau. However, the conference was not under the auspices of the WPC, so that the special representatives helped in a consultative capacity as individuals, with voice and vote, but no directives from the world movement.

Mr. Thornton, the Australian representative of the regional liaison office of the WFTU¹¹ was also at the table. Besides these delegates there were many observers without voice or vote, who were admitted to the open sessions.

⁹ D.D. Kosambi, 'For Peace in Asia and the Pacific, Peace in the World: At the Peking Preparatory Conference for the Peace Conference of the Asian and Pacific Regions (1952)'.

¹⁰ Guo Moruo (Kuo Mo-jo) was a Chinese author, poet, historian, archaeologist, and government official. He was the first President of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and remained so from its founding in 1949 until his death in 1978. He was also the first president of University of Science & Technology of China (USTC).

¹¹ World Federation of Trade Unions.

The formal opening was most impressive. The largest reception room of the Peking hotel was converted into a special assembly hall, with a large oval table which seated the delegations in alphabetical order of countries each with its name card in its own language and Chinese, as well as its national flag in silk.

The only decoration on the wall was a large reproduction of Picasso's dove of peace; however, on the final day, there appeared on the opposite wall a great black and white reproduction of Diego Rivera's tremendous painting in which the woes of the common people are represented in a world gripped by increasing war tension, fighting in Korea, Malaya, Vietnam, oppression of racial, national minorities, and shooting of workers; at the left, the leaders of China and the USSR offer the Five Power Pact to obdurate France, USA, and Britain. These two pictures were the most appropriate background for any real deliberations on peace.

The delegates observed the seriousness of their task from the very outset. In his speech opening the conference and welcoming the delegates, Kuo Mo-jo pointed to the serious position in Asia, the crucial position of Asia and the Pacific region in the world peace problem, the need for solidarity between the peoples of the countries represented, the total populations being over 1600 millions, more than half the world's population.

He proposed the leader of the Indian delegation to the Chair at the opening, and the conference actually began with the election of a presidium. This meant one delegate, usually the leader, from each delegation. The presidium was to finalize the recommendations of two committees, namely those for the draft organization proposals, and for the declaration of the conference.

These latter committees were in turn composed of one delegate from each delegation, to be assigned by the delegation through its leader; for these delegations like the USA, Canada, Malaya, Mongolia, where only one delegate made up the whole delegation, there had to be an option. The work of these two committees was passed through the presidium on June 5th and approved unanimously that afternoon in the concluding session of the conference. The intermediate sessions, from 0900 to noon and 1400 to 1700 were taken up with the speeches of the delegates, with leaders of all the delegations being in turn chairman and vice-chairman, in alphabetical order.

Behind this rather tame report lies an immense labour and a tremendous struggle to reach understanding. The organization committee had little trouble except with fixing the quota for delegations; this has still to be rather indefinite, because of passport difficulties for many delegations, including the Indian.

There was a question of holding the final conference in India, but the Indian government had chosen to turn its face away from the Peace Movement, often denying visas (or withholding them till after the event) for fraternal delegates. India, therefore, could not hold this conference, whence the choice again fell upon China, the largest country of the region.

The real turmoil was to be seen in the framing of our manifesto, which appears in print as a calm and innocuous document. But remember that it passed through many radical changes; it wasn't voted in by a majority; every person present finally agreed without reservation that it represented fairly the principles for which he or she stood.

There may be some question of phrasing or literary effect; many would have liked to see a shorter declaration, some only of principles, some with more fire; but the great achievement was that all agreed, in the end.

To understand this, it is necessary to look not only at the problems but also at the persons actually present. The most serious problems were Japanese rearmament, Korean armistice talks, germ warfare in Korea and China. But the Japanese delegates and people must be persuaded, not offended by our declaration which had also to win over the Americans. Madame Pak Den Ai¹² had at one time to remind us that while we were wrangling about phrases, one of her countrymen was being killed every second, some Korean woman or child burnt by Napalm, or bombed out of shelter and food. This was when some right-wing delegate in the drafting committee objected that the phraseology was the usual 'Communist claptrap'; he then realized that there were plenty of Communists in the world, that they trod the same earth, were being bled for their faith, but also desired peace; what was claptrap to him at a safe distance was the horrid reality for them.

Dr. Kingbury, the veteran US jurist, made a moving appeal in which he wanted to take back to his people the assurance that the 'victims of US aggression' did not confuse the government and the people of America; the victims saw this at once, and he received his assurance, direct reference to such aggression being deleted.

When talk of American aggression was high, the chairman (the chair was shared by India and China alternately) reminded the speaker that next to him were two delegates from American countries that had never attacked

¹² Pak Chong-ae, also known as Pak Den-ai, was a North Korean politician. She represented the Workers' Party of North Korea (WPNK) and after 1949 the unified Workers' Party of Korea (WPK).

anyone, that America was larger than the USA. When something was said of 'Communist aggression', the question was patiently answered by several including the very able Soviet delegate who pointed out that that was the way in which the Hitler-Mussolini-Tojo axis started, leading not to an attack on Communism, but to World War II in which the first to lose were the very same countries taken in by this piffle; broadening the basis of the peace movement was desirable, but in trying to placate its enemies, we should only get the peace movement of General MacArthur and President Truman, namely 'peace' dictated after a total war.

This meant three days and nights of discussion, during which all differences were smoothed out. This is the great achievement of our conference. It was not that someone agreed to compromise in disgust or gave up in sheer exhaustion after several sleepless nights. They all really agreed. The declaration gives the problems facing the conference in September, the spirit in which they are to be approached; but not the actual solutions, which must be reached only by the final conference. When one sees the extraordinary divergence in political and social backgrounds of the delegates, there is no doubt that this is unique even in the annals of the peace movement, though undoubtedly the world peace movement will soon surpass this achievement, having made gigantic strides in the three years of its life.

Apart from the conference proceedings, what impresses a delegate most about the country in which he did this work? To the Indian eye, the south of China is about like our Konkan with its paddy fields and red-soil hills; the north, being dustier and drier, resembles the UP very much in

appearance. Only an occasional pagoda, or the dress of the peasant will remind the traveller that he is not in India.

But if he looks behind the scenes, as he must, no matter how much time he spends in smoke-filled conference rooms, he will see that he is not in today's India; at best in an India of the future. The character of the people is now totally different in spite of their being peaceful, affable, hospitable to strangers, and generally placid, as our own people used to be in less hungry days.

In Peking, they no longer bother to lock up their houses at night, and nothing is stolen; can you risk that in Bombay, Calcutta or Madras? The peasant and the coolie have plenty to eat. The land has been redivided and now bears 20 percent more yield, apart from the new plots brought under cultivation, though the old unmechanized cultivation still prevails and there is a shortage of draught cattle.

The reason is that the peasant now keeps most of what he grows; there is no land rent at all, the village votes what taxes it will pay the quotas and landlords having disappeared with the Kuomintang. This seems incredible to any Indian.

The coolie stands up; the policeman at the street corner, instead of whacking him across the back as in the old days, exchanges smiles with him.

During every spare hour, there are meetings, in which every workman demands and receives an explanation of what his share in the work is, and why; if the lower group makes suggestions for revision, the topmost authority must pay attention, whether he be engineer or cabinet minister.

In the courts, though the Chief Judge of the whole country started life as a Mandarin under the last Manchus, the real judgment rests with the people, to whom Judge, Assistant Judge, and Assessors have to explain in the courtroom why the particular sentence was given; and woe to them if the public is not satisfied.

Always the group, always meetings in which full discussions of policy take place not as propaganda measures with some minor official laying down the law, but the people themselves taking an active share in governing themselves. They wish to be led, not to be ruled; the dictatorship in China is from below, not above something that no member of any 'Western Democratic' Government can understand, with his secret yearning for absolute power, with his contempt for the people as voting cattle to be allowed a formal change of masters every so many years.

Most impressive of all is the dancing. Not the State or theatre ballets, but the common peoples' dance in the evenings and on holidays, in the great public parks: ten thousand waiting outside because the park is filled with 50,000 people dancing. This is spontaneous folk-dancing, completely unlike the organized regimentation of Hitler's Germany. People don't dance that way unless they have plenty to eat and find life joyful.

It was not always thus in China. You can see old China, at Hong Kong (or at Bombay, Madras, Calcutta) with its bigger shops filled with luxury goods, necessities sky high, wealth and vice rubbing elbows on the streets with abject misery. What makes the difference?

THE LIBERATION. This one word will not be comprehensible to the visitor unless he knows what went before, under the Kuomintang, under

the Japanese, in the foreign settlements. Unless he is lucky enough to talk with someone like Rewi Alley,¹³ one of the most remarkable delegates present at the Peking Conference, he will not realize the miracle.

Even the volunteers and interpreters, young men and women for the greater part, are not conscious of how great the change has been, for they grew up with it; three years, three active years of full unhampered growth, are a whole age for them. They look ahead, not to the past. But talk to one of the leaders of New China, and you will realize what has happened, what gives even the gentlest of the top men in China his tough steel core. It is years of hammering that has forged the man. Behind the single day of public dancing that impresses the visitor lie thirty years of unremitting struggle.

Knowing this, one also realizes how deep is the desire of the Chinese for peace and friendship, the one thing that they ask of their brothers in the rest of the world, and most particularly of India, the land that first gave them the religion of peace.

Source: Preparatory Committee for Peace Conference of the Asian and Pacific Regions, Bulletin Number 11, August 6, 1952. Courtesy: W. E. B. Du Bois Papers, Robert S. Cox Special Collections and University Archives Research Center, UMass Amherst Libraries.

¹³ Rewi Alley was a New Zealand-born writer and political activist. A member of the Chinese Communist Party, he dedicated 60 years of his life, 1926-87, to the cause and was a key figure in the establishment of Chinese Industrial Cooperatives and technical training schools, including the Peili Vocational Institute (Bailie Vocational Institute or the Beijing Bailie University).

New Imperialism and Methods of Colonial Adventure¹⁴

Friends! I speak as an Asian, as an Indian, on behalf of the 90 member Indian delegation, the largest Indian delegation ever to participate in an international conference such as this. I believe that the 90 members sent here from India represent every shade of opinion in our country and stand shoulder to shoulder with the people of China. A certain emphasis on India's and Asia's special problems is unavoidable.

But we who are assembled here have one great advantage which those who mean to have war do not possess. Here we work together for the common cause of peace, we are not against each other, what benefits one benefits all. So please take this report as our contribution to the work of peace. If the relative importance of the examples we use seems wrong to some of you, remember that many other cases present a very similar threat to peace. It follows that the solutions would also be the same, in essence.

We, the assembled workers for peace, to whatever organization we may belong, have repeatedly demanded the right of self-determination for all nations. Security from external aggression is the very core of our work. Freedom from colonization, the complete equality of all races and peoples, has been our constant demand. Peaceful coexistence regardless of differences in language, culture, religion, past history, present social or

¹⁴ Speech made on behalf of the Indian delegation at the Second Plenary Session of the World Assembly for Peace (Helsinki, 1955).

economic system is our major aim. Let us survey the present situation the development with respect to these questions — so that the various commissions, sections and groups may then guide us towards their solution.

Every particular nationality has its specific features and problems that distinguish it from every other. Still, we may group them into classes when discussing the threat to peace, the possibility of a third world war.

In each class, I give only the salient examples.

The major classes are two. First, the sovereign states in danger of losing their independence and sovereignty. This danger may arise from naked aggression. But nowadays the aggressive measures are generally covert, disguised as foreign bases for protection. Still more insidious is economic domination, here camouflaged as ‘economic aid.’

Our second class of problems is that of colonies. Here, the nationality involved has not had formal diplomatic recognition as a state. The military occupation is quite open. There is no mistaking the exploitation, the economic domination.

In the first category we may place Japan. The U.S. occupation has merely changed its title; the formal, legal status may be different. But the soldiers, guns, bases, airfields are all still there. Japan served as the main base for the attack on Korea, though it was never claimed by anyone that the other side, dreamt of attacking Japan. The threat to peace in Asia and to world peace is undeniable, ever present. Rearmament is being thrust upon the Japanese against their own wishes, and against Article IX of their own

Constitution.¹⁵ If this rearmament should become a reality as it was before the war, it means the formation of blocs in Asia. It means that newly liberated Asian countries would be driven once again into the arms of the U.S.A., Great Britain, or some such powerful foreign nation. It means, in short, the dismemberment of Asia all over again. We may note that pressure is always brought to bear on Japan to prevent better relations with her neighbours, the U.S.S.R. and China. This is a further threat to peace. Japan must be freed forever from this eternal nightmare. Let all U.S. troops and bombers be evacuated from Okinawa and other Japanese islands immediately.

In this same category, we must include artificially created states: namely the two Germanys, the two Koreas, the two Vietnams. Each of these divisions is a threat of the first rank to world peace. In each case the threat of atomic war has openly been used. The most ridiculous situation of this type arises out of Taiwan. The runaway clique ruling this island has been recognized as the government of China by the U.S.A., and by its satellites, to the extent of taking China's rightful seat in the U.N. With Japan and South Korea, Taiwan is a base for operations against China, it is a base for atomic and bacteriological warfare. It has been used for piratical operations against shipping, even against British ships. It still remains the greatest single danger to peace in Asia. We demand emphatically that the Americans leave Taiwan and other Chinese islands at once. Let the Chinese settle their internal questions, including that of Taiwan, as peacefully as possible, but in their own way.

¹⁵ Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution contains the 'No war' clause. It came into effect on May 3, 1947, soon after World War II. In English translation, the text of the article reads: 'Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.'

In all these cases, military considerations were uppermost. In Pakistan, the acquisition by the U.S.A. of bases was masked by an agreement for economic aid. Since this agreement, the economic position of Pakistan has greatly deteriorated, according to statements made by the very leaders of Pakistan. That the military portion of the agreement is not for defence but for aggression is clear from the great distance of the bases from the U.S.A. In addition, there is infringement of sovereignty. It is the local American commander and the President of the U.S.A. who decide when their military forces are to be used, even to defend Pakistan.

Purely financial considerations ruled uppermost in the Guatemala affair last year; the interests not of the people but of the United Fruit Company alone were considered in financing a so-called revolution and bombing Guatemala from bases in neighbouring countries. All this had the full blessing of Mr. Dulles and his State Department.¹⁶

It is clear from all this that real independence of nations and the guarantee of peace go together. Bases so far away from the U.S.A. cannot possibly defend America. They can and are being used to enslave the countries supposedly defended. Their aggressive purpose is very crudely expressed by American newspapers and politicians. Boasts appear every day proclaiming that within five hours such and such a spot in the U.S.S.R. may be ruined forever by atom bombers based in North Africa, Turkey or some European country. Is this anything but avowed preparation for a third world war?

¹⁶ This is a reference to the 1954 Guatemalan coup d'état, which was the result of a CIA covert operation code-named PBSuccess. It deposed the democratically elected Guatemalan President Jacobo Árbenz and ended the Guatemalan Revolution of 1944–1954. It installed the military dictatorship of Carlos Castillo Armas, the first in a series of U.S.-backed authoritarian rulers in Guatemala.

We come now to the second category — colonies. These present a greater variety. In Tunisia, Morocco, Malaya, Kenya, nationalities claim their independence from the foreigner. In South Africa a small white minority denies the simplest human rights, denies even citizenship to the real Africans. At the same time, vast natural resources are exploited with the cheapest native labour for the profit of companies whose shareholders live thousands of miles away in places like London. The situation is unfortunately paralleled by some Latin American countries. There, an Indian population, dominated by a white minority, is often exploited for the benefit of U.S. financiers. Over most of Africa, in any case, colonization is the rule. The excuse has been made that the natives have no conception of a modern state. The natives are backward. The natives are children who must be ruled for their own good with fraternal despotism by the white man. The natives will be unhappy if their foreign masters cease to apply the constant lash. This argument is nonsense.

Both these cases have a great deal in common. They rest upon the same foundation. In India, we know that the British subjugated the entire country under the pretext of maintaining law and order. The same military agreements were made that the U.S. now offers. Bases were claimed in the same manner. The same protection against possible aggression was offered. The reality is that the foreigner simply became the master. As for economic aid, we hear much of what the British did for India. Actually, it was we Indians that gave the capital aid to the British in the way of raw materials paid for at far below their value and procured for Britain a monopoly of our market for goods manufactured in England. We can assure the peoples of the world that demands for advanced bases are a method of colonial adventure. Economic aid is simply another way of

acquiring a new colony. These new manoeuvres are as dangerous to peace as the old. Struggles for spheres of influence continue in this new manner. Raw materials, strategic geographical positions, bases, form the objects of this new imperialism, leading to another world war.

These are not just theoretical dangers to peace. The NATO and SEATO organizations have taken long strides towards another world war. German rearmament is one of the bitter realities that every friend of peace must face. Japanese rearmament is the next step. Military high commands have openly prepared to use, as a matter of course, 'tactical' atomic weapons. Actually, a tactical atomic weapon is impossible. Such weapons can be used only for mass destruction. That their use should be quietly taken for granted while negotiations are going on to ban all such weapons is highly significant. The armaments race continues. The most brutal suppression of colonial demands for freedom has not in fact diminished. In particular, I call your attention to the freedom struggle in Goa. We Indians feel this question to be of great importance, because attempts have been made to link it with NATO and SEATO, for new foreign military bases on the coast of India. Taiwan, South Vietnam, South Korea, regularly make the most provocative declarations. Possibly these aggressive declarations may originate elsewhere, to be spoken through such convenient mouths. The unification of Germany on a peaceful basis, without rearmament, is still an unsolved problem. We see an increase in military pacts where neither of the two parties are threatened by each other or by any third power. In short, the enemies of peace seem to have a timetable for war preparations.

However, these enemies of peace cannot get the main force on their side. This force is world public opinion, which has been increasingly mobilized

for peace. We too have some positive achievements. The greatest of these positive achievements seems to me the enunciation of the Five Principles: non-aggression, mutual coexistence, respect for sovereignty, territory and culture, and non-interference in each other's internal affairs. These are exactly the principles we have been popularizing since the Warsaw Peace Congress in 1950. But it is a matter for the greatest satisfaction that the two largest countries in the world, China and India, first made these declarations through their Prime Ministers, Chou En-lai and Jawaharlal Nehru. We Indians are particularly proud of the lead which our great Premier has taken in the cause of world peace, of the conferences he has organized and the extensive travels which he has undertaken for his splendid cause. We feel that through him India's great desire for peace has been very ably expressed. He has reached the hearts of the people all over the world. Burma, Indonesia, the democratic Republic of Vietnam, Yugoslavia, the U.S.S.R., have expressed their adherence to and support of the Five Principles. At Geneva last year a conference showed how the Vietnam problem could be solved by negotiation. Though the U.S.A. and South Vietnam did not sign the agreement, the fighting in effect stopped. The Austrian Treaty is a most welcome achievement for all lovers of peace. The Bandung Conference showed that Asian and African nations could meet together to regulate their own affairs. No European power was able to interfere, though the voice of America was heard through some willing Asian mouths.

One may note that the countries most anxious for peace are precisely those that have achieved liberation in recent years. Their resources are all needed for reconstruction. Their economies would be crushed under the burden of an armaments race. They are anxious to promote world trade provided this

trade and mutual exchange are on a free and equal basis. It follows that the independence of nations is the strongest possible guarantee for peace, just as the hunt for colonies has always been a major cause of world war. India as a colony was dragged into the world wars, losing heavily in men, money and materials. Free India is a great force for world peace.

It is not for a report like this to lay down solutions. That is the work of our various sections and committees. Yet solutions have been reached on the evacuation of foreign bases in Egypt, the Sudan agreement, the French settlements in India. Negotiations are reported to be in the offing over a Soviet-Japanese peace treaty. India and Pakistan will negotiate over Kashmir. Surely the spirit and the technique of these negotiations are of the utmost importance for us, the more so as the forthcoming Four Power talks at Geneva present a wonderful opportunity to further the cause of peace. We have to mobilize public opinion so that it may be felt through the governments present at those talks and through nations friendly to those powers. How shall we do it?

The answer seems clear. The Chou-Nehru Five Principles can be adopted by every nation. All bases on foreign soil are to be evacuated without delay. Non-aggression pacts, multilateral regional pacts based on the Five Principles must replace military agreements. Every colony must be released from its foreign masters. If any such colonial people then lacks the means for development, the aid offered must be free of open or concealed political conditions. In fact, we need a mechanism to examine all cases of such economic aid, just to forestall political pressure. In cases where a nation is divided into two or more parts, they should be encouraged to unite peacefully. But in no case may any foreign power use

this division as a pretext for military intervention. Finally, let me emphasize the role of trade and cultural exchange in the cause of peace. The visit of a good athletics team or a cultural mission, a theatre troupe or a film festival also promotes better understanding between the common people of different countries.

In all the foregoing, the name of the U.S.A. has figured prominently in a rather unfortunate light. There is no denying the sad role of the United States Government in this matter. But the real American people, no matter how badly misled by some of their politicians and journalists, are as sincere friends of peace as any other. All we ask is that the people of America recall their own brief history, that they should not deny to others the privileges they have themselves claimed in their own glorious past. When we talk of coexistence, it rests on the principles of George Washington, their first president. His final address to the legislature contains the famous phrase “with malice towards none, with goodwill to all.” He was at that time referring to United States policy as regards other nations, and his words contain the precise spirit of coexistence. Having secured their independence from colonial exploitation, why do the Americans not support colonial liberation movements everywhere else. Having maintained in their Declaration of Independence that all men are born free with equal right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, will the Americans tolerate racial, imperialist or religious persecution in other countries? They have fought the bloodiest civil war in history. British attempts at intervention were nipped in the bud. After the Civil War of 1860-65, legal action secured compensation from the British for the Alabama incident. Should these very American people now allow their youth to be killed intervening in other civil wars, provoking the holocaust

of Korea? What was the Monroe Doctrine¹⁷ except a warning to foreign powers who wanted bases in the two Americas, powers which meant to colonize Latin-American countries? What has the Monroe doctrine itself become if not an instrument of colonization? So, here we appeal especially to the American people to be true to their own finest principles, to allow other people to follow them too.

For all that I speak as an Indian. The love of peace, the spirit of non-aggression and non-interference is in our very marrow and blood. The Five Principles have pointed the way — can we not all follow it? We here call upon the peoples of the world to join us for a happier, brighter future, free of all danger, where our children can rebuild this fair earth with atomic energy as a better home for mankind.

Source: World Assembly for Peace, Helsinki, June 22nd-29th, 1955: Proceedings. Courtesy, Secretariat of the World Council of Peace.

¹⁷ Monroe Doctrine, considered a cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy, was enunciated by President James Monroe in 1823. Declaring that the Old World and New World had different systems and must remain distinct spheres, Monroe made four basic points: (1) the United States would not interfere in the internal affairs of or the wars between European powers; (2) the United States recognized and would not interfere with existing colonies and dependencies in the Western Hemisphere; (3) the Western Hemisphere was closed to future colonization; and (4) any attempt by a European power to oppress or control any nation in the Western Hemisphere would be viewed as a hostile act against the United States. A pre-eminent articulation of American isolationism, the doctrine later took a life of its own and emerged over time as the assertion of American hegemony in the Western hemisphere and beyond, particularly after the Spanish-American War of 1898.

Afterword

In April 1949, delegates from across the world congregated in Geneva's Bâtiment Électoral under the auspices of the Red Cross to discuss best practices for mitigating the horrors of warfare. The ostensible purpose of the gathering was to prepare for future conflicts. Less than a month before this, a Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace was organized at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York by the National Council of the Arts, Sciences and Professions. Derided in contemporary American press as a communist ruse, the conference went ahead notwithstanding pickets and protests around the venue. The State Department refused visas and the CIA kept detailed tabs on its sponsors and attendees, several of whom — like W.E.B. Du Bois and Paul Robeson — would later be harassed during McCarthyite witch-hunts. The conference concluded having resolved that “Peace is necessary and peace is possible. The maintenance of peace is the responsibility of all peoples.”¹⁸

Present amongst the participants as the sole delegate from Asia was the Indian polymath D.D. Kosambi. His criticism of American belligerence was as scathing as that of the venue: “I am forced to the inevitable conclusion that, while talking about peace at this luxurious American Conference, you are already engaged in waging war on a considerable part of the world's population and waging war against democracy.” (12) He was of the opinion that a hungry world was a hostile world and that “[t]he issue

¹⁸ Daniel S. Gillmor (ed), *Speaking of Peace: The Widely Discussed Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace* (New York, 1949), p. 133.

of peace or war does not depend upon a single individual who is ostensibly at the helm of a nation, but upon the dominant class which really holds the power.” (18) This was a Marxist stance. This was also an Asia-centred position.

In the preparatory meeting for the Asia and Pacific Peace Conference at the Peking Hotel in 1952, Kosambi developed his ideas further. The peace movement had to remain united to be effective. It could not afford to be anything but broad-based and polyphonic. He saw in revolutionary China, the utopic image of a future India. Following the Bandung Conference (1955), Kosambi increasingly found in the five principles of peaceful coexistence undergirding Sino-Indian friendship, the key to world peace. In the same year, at the World Assembly for Peace in Helsinki, Kosambi made robust arguments against foreign interventions — both military and economic — as the leader of the ninety members-strong Indian delegation. He was alarmed by the proliferation of offensive military alliances and the ever-mounting threat of atomic warfare, a concern that would go on to shape his worldview in the last decade of his life.

Kosambi regarded nuclear deterrence as the ultimate superstition. A world characterized by asymmetries in nuclear arsenals was, for him, always already on the brink of a thermonuclear catastrophe. Stockpiling warheads, weaponizing science, and valuing compliance over conscience in research were all roads leading to a certain apocalypse. It is not surprising, therefore, that in a letter addressed to Rameshwari Nehru (dated 23 July, 1957) — Chairperson of the Indian Preparatory Committee for the International Conference against A and H-Bombs and for Disarmament, Kosambi wrote:

Speaking not only for myself, but on behalf of all competent and honest scientists of my acquaintance, let me assure you that the work of your Convention is regarded by all of us as being of the utmost importance. Not only our country but the whole world needs to be freed, once and for all, from the danger of atomic warfare. This will be a first step which should ultimately relieve us from the fear of mass-destruction, and which must lead ultimately to the abolition of all warfare. But it is today the essential step. The All-India Convention must prove that the ban on nuclear weapons and on mass killing of any sort can be achieved peacefully, by pressure of public opinion, and without damage to the integrity or political sovereignty of any nation.¹⁹

In the late 1950s, Kosambi would eventually fall out with the World Peace Council and its national affiliate, the All India Peace and Solidarity Organization, of which he had been one of the founders along with Saifuddin Kitchlew, Pandit Sundarlal, Ajoy Ghosh, A.K. Gopalan, Prithviraj Kapoor, Balraj Sahni, and Krishan Chander among others. He would, however, remain steadfastly committed to the values of anti-imperialism and world peace. When the international peace movement of the 1950s is dismissed offhand for its proximity to the Soviet Union, maverick peace activists like D.D. Kosambi face erasure from a contemptuously ignored history of nuclear disarmament and anti-war solidarity. These were conscientious intellectuals who were not afraid of engaging in emotive and partisan diplomacy. They sought to mobilize global public opinion for world peace “in an age and time of extensive

¹⁹ Meera Kosambi (ed), *Unsettling the Past: Unknown Aspects and Scholarly Assessments of D.D. Kosambi* (Ranikhet, 2013), pp. 125-126.

witch-hunting, where being called a communist was far more dangerous than being caught red-handed in a fraud or robbery.”²⁰ That time seems to have returned again.

Kosambi’s association with the undivided Communist Party of India was cordial but not without tensions. His deep appreciation for the Soviet Union was not unqualified either. His brief collaboration with Nehru’s Government was arms-length at best. That the post-war peace movement could attract and organize people like him was a testament to its strength as an accommodative forum. That he had to eventually part ways, was perhaps a flaw of the movement’s faction-ridden nature. As Rachel Leow has argued, if we intend to carry out an honest appraisal of the 1950s moment, “we might also unburden ourselves of Cold War languages of ‘fronts’ and ‘stooges’: they do disservice to those who rejected ‘the nightmare of war’, and ‘dreamed of peace’ at precisely a time when the rise of new nations, new sovereignties, new global institutions and a new world order seemed to place such dreams, however temporarily, within reach.”²¹

Kosambi reminds us that those dreams, however distant they might appear now, are never completely out of reach.

The first speech in this booklet has been collected from Daniel S. Gillmor (ed), *Speaking of Peace: An edited report of the Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace, New York, March, 25, 26, and 27, 1949 under the auspices of National Council of the Arts, Sciences and Professions*. The second essay reproduced here had previously been

²⁰ D.D. Kosambi, ‘Science and Freedom’ (1952), *Exasperating Essays* (Marxists Internet Archive).

²¹ Rachel Leow, ‘A Missing Peace: The Asia-Pacific Peace Conference in Beijing, 1952 and the Emotional Making of Third World Internationalism’, *Journal of World History* 30/1&2 (2019), p. 53.

anthologized in D.D. Kosambi, *Exasperating Essays: Exercises in the Dialectical Method* (New Delhi, 1957). The third text is a report that has been obtained from the W.E.B. Du Bois papers with the kind permission of the Robert S. Cox Special Collections and University Archives Research Center, UMass Amherst Libraries. The last speech has been sourced from the *Proceedings of the World Assembly for Peace* (Helsinki, 1955).

Yanis Iqbal has transcribed three of the original texts for this booklet and Ananyo Chakraborty has proofread them. They have been lightly edited for clarity and consistency. The last two texts have been renamed for this edition. Tushar Srivastava has annotated this booklet without compromising readability. Srestha Majumder has designed the front cover. For the back cover, we have repurposed the original cover of the historic Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace's edited report, *Speaking of Peace* (New York, 1949). We are thankful to Dr Jesse Olsavsky for writing an introduction to this booklet at a rather short notice. Prof Suchetana Chattopadhyay continues to remain a most generous well-wisher. I end with our regular Red Books Day appeal: we bring out these pamphlets and booklets every year through purely voluntary effort. Our only encouragement comes from you, the reader. If you like what you have read here, tell a friend about this booklet. That is our reward.

Suchintan Das

(On behalf of the Sankrityayan Kosambi Study Circle)



speaking OF peace...

THE WIDELY-DISCUSSED CULTURAL AND SCIENTIFIC

CONFERENCE FOR WORLD PEACE



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T. O. Thackrey
Alexander Vucho
Henry A. Wallace
Colston E. Warne
Gene Weltfish
Ira Wolfert
and many others