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## EDITORIAL.

### AN ULTIMATUM TO JAPAN.

*"We never are but by ourselves betrayed."*—CONGREVE.

On January 28th, Mr. Eden (Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs), made a statement in the House of Commons giving authentic news of brutal treatment of British prisoners by the Japanese located in the Southern area, the Philippine Islands, the Netherland East Indies, Borneo, Malaya, Burma, Siam, and Indo-China; and that the Japanese Government have hitherto withheld permission for any neutral inspection of any of the camps in question. Mr. Eden said:

"For some time past information has been reaching His Majesty's Government regarding the conditions under which prisoners are detained and worked in some of these areas, and as it was of so grave a character as to be likely to cause distress to relatives of prisoners and civilian internees in Japanese hands His Majesty's Government felt bound to satisfy themselves that it was authentic before making it public. We are now so satisfied, and it becomes my painful duty to tell the House that in Siam there are many thousands of prisoners from the British Commonwealth, including India, who are being compelled by the Japanese military to live in tropical jungle conditions without adequate shelter, clothing, food, or medical attention; and these men are forced to work on building a railway and making roads. Our information is that their health is rapidly deteriorating; that a high percentage are seriously ill; and that there have been some thousands of deaths."

Mr. Eden then gave detailed information of the barbarous nature of our Japanese enemy "who has violated not only the principles of international law, but all canons of decent and civilised conduct."

"It is with the deepest regret," he continued, "that I have been obliged to make such a statement to the House. But after consultation with their allies who are equally victims of this unspeakable savagery, His Majesty's Government have felt it to be their duty to make public the facts."

Well! better late than never, but after the bestialities of "Hong Kong and Singapore," what did His Majesty's Government expect from these barbarians?

If the Government learned nothing from the conduct of the Japanese in the past, our memory is not so short:—

- (1) The public violation of British nurses;
- (2) Their incarceration in Japanese brothels;
- (3) The murder of those women who resisted;
- (4) Nurses bombed to death and drowned.

The Special Correspondent of the *Times*, from G.H.Q., India, reports:

"The violation by the Japanese of local women in Burma has been established beyond all doubt. At

Kyitkyina, for instance, they raped every woman they saw at the time of its occupation."

Of the appalling suffering of male prisoners and their torture and deaths, there can be no denial, and we may hope the protests of their families and friends will have some effect upon the Government.

After "Hong Kong," this Journal alone, as far as we have evidence, protested to Members of Parliament against the leniency with which "free Japs" ran around this Metropolis—and were permitted to defile the environment of the Royal domain of Kensington Gardens—and we succeeded in excluding them, presumably by a tardy order of the Home Secretary. We expressed the opinion, in 1942, and repeat it, that a Government which cannot prevent or punish an enemy which violates its women—including the nurses of the sick—is not fit to govern.

### THANKS TO SIR WILLIAM DAVISON, M.P.

We nurses owe thanks to Sir William Davison, M.P., who recently asked Mr. Herbert Morrison, the Home Secretary, in the House of Commons: "Whether steps would be taken to repatriate all Japanese subjects in Britain because of the feelings of anger caused by their continuing residence after the inhuman treatment by the Japanese of our prisoners of war."

To which Mr. Morrison replied: "The number of Japanese subjects resident in this country is quite small and the question of their repatriation involves various considerations, including in particular the willingness of the Japanese Government to repatriate British subjects in exchange."

Sir William: "Are you aware that serious breaches of the peace are likely to occur if Japanese are seen in our streets?" (Loud cries of "No.")

Mr. Morrison: "That question has not arisen. I hope it will not. If the public start that sort of thing they may find themselves attacking someone who is not a Japanese at all."

We must not forget that Mr. Herbert Morrison, our Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security, is a "conscientious objector" who has never fought for his country; we cannot, therefore, expect him to adopt a pugilistic attitude. The atrocities of the Japanese in the treatment of prisoners of war, of whom 22,000 have died, has naturally aroused indignant grief in Great Britain, Australia, the United States, and China. We advise the British Parliament to wake up and take the gloves off.

An ultimatum to these barbarians, that unless Japan treats prisoners of war, male and female, with the usual degree of decency and humanity, it will be swept from the face of the earth as a nation at the earliest possible date, is the least punishment the Allies can inflict in support of civilisation.

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