

Preparing the Indian Revolution

By EARL BROWDER

IMPERIALISM is making desperate efforts in the Far East to stem the rising tide of worker and peasant movements, which already are involving, directly or indirectly, about half the human race.

The great Chinese revolution brought four hundred million people onto the stage of history, there to play an active role instead of their previous passive submission to the will of their imperialist masters. And now the Indian revolution, second in scope and importance among colonial revolutions only to the Chinese, is gathering its forces. This fact is given point and emphasized by the cable news from India of new suppressions and persecutions of the Indian workers.

At three o'clock on the morning of March 20th, British Indian troops and police were mobilized in Bombay, the city was placed under martial law, trade-union premises were searched and smashed up, and hundreds of leaders were thrown into prison. Among those reported arrested is the name of Dhundira Jahengdi, former president of the All-India Trade Union Congress. In Calcutta, among the arrested, are the officers of the Bengal Trade Union Federation, the Jute Workers' Union, the Calcutta Scavengers' Union, the Bengal Workers-Peasants Party, and the Young Comrades League. At Allahabad the arrested included Puran Chandra Joshi, secretary of the United Provinces Workers-Peasants Party, and at Lucknow, C. D. Singh, a member of the Legislative Council. At Lahore, Poona, and other cities, similar raids and mass arrests were made and trade-union headquarters closed. More than one hundred leaders are in prison charged with "waging war against the king," while searches and seizures continue. A nationwide campaign to destroy the trade unions of India has been inaugurated by British imperialism.

TREACHEROUS ROLE OF BRITISH LABOR PARTY

In former years the Indian working class looked to the British Labor Party and Trade Union Congress for help in their struggles for independence and for improving their living standards. But a long series of treacheries has completed their disillusionment. In 1924 the MacDonald Labor Government, which placed Lord Olivier, a skilled imperialist administrator, in the office of Secre-

tary of State for India, approved that official's infamous pronouncement known as the "Bengal Ordinance," whereby Indians may be arrested without warrant and held in prison indefinitely without trial by the irresponsible agents of British imperialism in India. Thousands of Indians have died in prison under this Ordinance, and hundreds are still held. In 1927 and 1928, the Labor Party sent two representatives into the Simon Commission, to cooperate with the Baldwin Tory government for devising a scheme for suppressing the Indian nationalist movement.

When the Indian masses forced the boycott of the Simon Commission, its visit to India became the occasion of mass violence by the British armed forces, the jailing of thousands, physical assaults upon hundreds, and the killing of many, even including the bourgeois leader, Lajpat Rai. The treacherous "left" leader of the British T. U. Congress, A. A. Purcell, went to India in 1927 to demonstrate the "friendship" of the British labor leaders; but when he got back to England he supported the Simon Commission and denounced the cause of Indian independence in the House of Commons. These and a hundred other experiences have brought Indian workers to the conclusion, uttered by Dewan Chaman Lall, chairman of the India T. U. Congress:

"India has nothing to expect from such hypocritical socialist leaders . . . The Labor Party works together with the Second International as the advance guard of British and European imperialism in order to prevent or postpone the emancipation of the colonial peoples."

Thus, through bitter experiences the Indian workers are being emancipated from the influence of the social-reformist traitors of the Second International, and to the degree that this is accomplished they are prepared for the next act in the drama of the Indian revolution.

TREACHERY OF THE INDIAN BOURGEOISIE

A fundamental weakness in the struggle for national independence has been that its leadership was in the hands of the bourgeoisie. To prepare the masses for revolution it is therefore necessary, in addition to destroying the influence of international reformism, also to cut the masses loose from the bourgeoisie and its leadership. Much progress in this direction is resulting from the open betrayal of the independence cause perpetrated in August, 1928, at the Lucknow All-Parties Conference, which adopted the so-called Nehru Report, which lays down a proposal for compromise with the Simon Commission on the basis of accepting Dominion status.

The Nehru Report proposes to British imperialism that the

present form of government shall be replaced by a so-called dominion form, in which the King of England and Emperor of India, his Majesty George V., shall name the Governor-General of India, the latter official exercising such powers as:

- Either to dissolve or extend the term of the Legislature at will.
- To veto any act of the Legislature, without recourse.
- To appoint all executive officials of the Government, from Prime Minister down to the provincial officials.
- To have unlimited power of removals from office of all officials.
- To be Commander-in-Chief of the military, naval, and air forces.
- To appoint all foreign representatives.
- To appoint all judges, with power of removing them.
- To control all property and revenues of India, etc., etc.

In addition, the Nehru Report specifically accepts for the Indian people the burden of making good all claims arising out of British imperial rule from the time of the East India Company down to date, including pensions, etc., for all soldiers and servants of imperialism for their services in keeping India in subjection. All of this is done by the Indian bourgeois leaders in the name of Indian independence! At the same time they know, and the whole world knows, that even this scheme the British government will never accept, so the bourgeois leaders have succeeded in nothing but to disarm their own people.

It is clear that the bourgeoisie of India is moving over definitely to a union with British imperialism in return for protection against the rising workers' and peasants' movement. It is assuming the role formerly played by the Indian princes and feudal aristocracy, that of servant of British rule, and is preparing also to unite with them.

WORKERS AND PEASANTS THE REAL NATIONALIST FORCE

Turning away from the bourgeoisie and from international reformism, with all their betrayals, the workers and peasants of India are learning to organize their own strength and to set up connections with the really revolutionary forces of the world who can be depended upon as reliable allies. They are engaging in widespread struggles against foreign imperialism as well as native reaction and exploitation. They are infusing new life into the whole country by their independent struggles.

A wave of strikes has for a year been extending over the British-operated state railways. The steel workers at Jemshadpur have carried on a long and courageous battle. The textile workers in almost every center in the country have been fighting to improve the terrible conditions that have kept India a nation of slaves. The peasants of Bardoli have gone up against the guns of the British military in a glorious battle against the oppressors, even though betrayed time

and again by the bourgeois-Gandhiist leaders. A list of the struggles of the past year alone would fill many pages, and all of them sprang from the initiative of the masses. In every case the official leaders have been not leading but holding back the masses, not fighting but compromising the fights. The movement of the masses is spontaneous, and responds to their deeply felt needs.

That is precisely the reason why the bourgeoisie has become afraid of the revolution, because it sees with fear the workers and peasants emerging as the dominant revolutionary force, with its own program, its own needs, its own demands. That is why the bourgeoisie joins hands with the princes and with British imperialism; that is why it concocts the Nehru Report. It is afraid of the rising of the people, it is afraid of the real nationalism of the Indian masses.

At this time in India is taking place a fundamental shift in the alignment of class forces, similar to that which took place in China in 1927, with the treachery and breakdown of the Kuomintang.

DANGERS WITHIN THE WORKERS-PEASANTS ORGANIZATIONS

The struggle for independence of India has become part of the whole struggle for improving the conditions of life of the masses. It must be conducted by the working class with the peasantry as its principal ally. The basic economic problem of the Indian revolution is that of the land. But without working-class leadership the peasantry will find it impossible to solve any of its problems. The degree of maturity and organization of the working class, therefore, becomes of crucial importance for all India. And on this point, while the workers are making great progress both in organization and consciousness, dangers exist which are very great precisely because in this period such great tasks and responsibilities are thrown upon the shoulders of the newly organized working class.

Within the Indian trade-union organizations the influence of international reformism is still strong, in spite of the open treacheries described briefly above, and in spite of the open denunciation of the Second International and British Labor Party by the most influential leaders of the Indian unions. Especially pernicious is the propaganda put forth by the British delegates to India (Purcell, Halls-worth, Shaw, etc.), designed to separate the workers from the independence movement, to turn their attention towards "purely" trade-union activity, to discredit "politics," to entangle the Indian trade unions in the Amsterdam International. To the extent that this propaganda is effective it results in isolating the Indian workers, cutting them off from contact with the peasant masses, degenerating trade-union activity into a struggle of small groups for special privileges, and generally stunting the development of the working class.

The channel through which international reformism exerts its influence upon India is provided by a section of the leadership composed of lawyers and other bourgeois elements, who have established themselves at the head of certain unions, and maintain close connections both with the native bourgeoisie and with the British Trade Union Congress and Labor Party.

A choice example of the Indian reformists is Mr. N. M. Joshi, who occupies the very strategic position of general secretary of the All-India Trade Union Congress. Mr. Joshi is a lawyer who makes his living as the leader of various trade unions, with the support of a bourgeois organization known as the Servants of India Society. He holds a position of leadership in the trade unions by means of this base, from which he can offer the unions certain technical services otherwise very difficult for them to obtain, while at the same time he puts forth the program of the worst enemies of the Indian working class. Joshi openly advocates affiliation to Amsterdam and the abandonment of the program of international unity, at the moment when the international reformists were publicly rejecting the demand for Indian independence, supporting instead the British Labor Party's imperialist policy. He thus links himself up directly with the servants of the British Empire.

When Mr. Joshi found it impossible to drag the All-India Trade Union Congress into Amsterdam, he joined in an indirect project in the same direction, worked out by Mr. Bunji Suzuki, the labor agent of Japanese imperialism as head of the Nippon Sodomei, together with Mr. Albert Thomas, chief of the League of Nations Labor Office at Geneva, for the organization of an "Asiatic Labor Conference" in opposition to the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat, which already includes all important trade-union movements in the East except that of India. At the December, 1928, Congress of the India Trade Unions held at Jharia, Mr. Joshi was able to defeat the proposal to affiliate to the Pan-Pacific Secretariat by bringing forward against it this proposal for an Asiatic Conference to be held in Calcutta, by a narrow majority.

An example of Mr. Joshi's detailed policies in the class struggle is to be found in his position as one of the editors of the *Indian Railway Magazine*, a shameful sort of journal of more reactionary character than an American "company union" paper; in its issue of July, 1928, there is printed an editorial article in justification of the murder of striking railroad workers, praise of the scabs who took the stikers' places, and an appeal to the government to reward the scabs with an extra month's wages. Mr. Joshi finds it quite natural to be editor of such a journal.

Besides the prominent Mr. Joshi, there are a large number of reactionaries in more humble position, but, in their own way, just

as bad. The Indian working class is only taking its first steps to throw off such leadership; until this process is completed, and all the big and little reactionaries like N. M. Joshi are eliminated, the Indian trade-union movement will be unable successfully to fight its everyday battles which grow more bitter every week, or its great political struggle for a free India and for a workers' and peasants' government.

THE IX ALL-INDIA T. U. CONGRESS

Full reports of the IX Congress of the trade unions are not yet available. But from the fragmentary knowledge which has come from India, we can judge its main characteristics. It was, in the main, a new step in advance in the development of a fighting mass trade-union movement, directed against native reaction and foreign imperialism.

The Congress was addressed by J. W. Johnstone, from the United States, who attended as the delegate of the International League Against Imperialism. Johnstone was arrested and deported by the British Government as soon as he had spoken to the Congress. The Congress answered this provocation by deciding by a large majority to affiliate to the League Against Imperialism and send delegates to its coming World Congress in Paris in July.

On the issue of independence versus the dominion-status surrender, the Congress unequivocally declared for an unrelenting struggle for complete independence. It recorded the determination to press more energetically the struggle for improved wages and working conditions for all workers. It continued and further developed the alliance with the rising peasant movement and the organized connections between workers and peasants. It put forth a platform of demands for social insurance, for improved housing, etc. The Congress meetings were themselves used as instruments of mobilization of masses of workers, tens of thousands of miners from the neighboring pits attending the sessions of the Congress.

The militant spirit of the Congress was, as in previous years, only partially reflected organizationally in the elections of officers. Mr. Joshi, leader of all right-wing tendencies, retained his post of general secretary. As chairman was elected Jawaharlal Nehru, one of the most prominent "left nationalists," son of Pundit Motilal Nehru, who wrote the infamous Nehru Report. Young Nehru is in open political opposition to his father; in fact he calls himself a communist and is chairman of the United Provinces Workers-Peasants Party—but the actual substance of his political views seems to forecast for him a role in India similar to that played in China by the "left Kuomintang" of Wang Ching-wei & Co., a role of indecision, confusion, and final collapse in face of decisive struggle.

The decisive changes taking place in the Indian working class are not yet reflected at the top, except in the most distorted fashion. Much more definitely it is shown in the strike struggles and strike leadership, in which the left wing and communists come more and more to the front. Many great unions have arisen in the last months out of these struggles, entirely under left-wing leadership and control. These are not even allowed a vote in the Congress, but they control the masses in their struggles, which is much more important.

GREAT UPHEAVALS NOW PREPARING

Against this background of shifting class forces, betrayals by the bourgeoisie, the rise of the mass movement of workers and peasants, etc., the recent nation-wide raids of the government against the trade unions may be seen in their immense significance; also the fact, as reported in the news cables, that "the government coup has caused intense excitement throughout India." The first response of the workers to the provocation of the government was the strike of the textile mills at Dadar, near Bombay, where 20,000 workers walked out in a body on the day of the raids. The press censorship makes it impossible to follow closely the development of the struggle. What is clear is that great upheavals are now in preparation in India, economic struggles merging into great political battles, and in these upheavals the workers' movement, in alliance with the peasantry, will emerge as the bearers of the national independence struggle, which becomes part of, and merges into the struggle for socialism, for the workers' and peasants' democratic dictatorship.

