

FOR THE UNITY OF THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

Europe is not the World.

By M. N. Roy.

Led by Lenin, the Communist International became a real international proletarian organization by including the countries outside Europe and America in the realm of its activities. The necessity of union between the proletariat of the advanced imperialist countries and the colonial toiling masses was never realized by the Second International. The failure to appreciate the effect of colonial plunder upon the capitalist structure in the metropolis contributed largely to Social Democratic Revisionism. Bernstein and Kautsky found flaws in the theory of continual impoverishment, because their limited outlook applied to **Europe** calculation made by Marx on a **world-wide** scale. They did not understand that the apparent rise of the standard of living of the European proletariat was at the cost of the colonial toiling masses, many times larger in number. Spread over the working-class as a whole (throughout the world), the slight improvement noticed in the imperialist countries would vanish, and the standard of living of the proletariat on the world-wide scale would be found to be sinking, as predicted by Marx.

Lenin rescued Marxism from the revisionist patronage, which inadvertently was more imperialist than Marxist, by emphasizing its truly international character, the practical expression to which was given by making the liberation of the subject peoples one of the cardinal points of the programme of

the Communist International. This practical application of the programme of international proletarian unity was too realistic for the Social Democratic theoreticians to grasp. On his return from Russia in 1920, Crispin cut stupid jokes about Bolshevik relations with the Khans of Khiva. The pure proletarian conscience of Crispin and his kind was evidently shocked by the sacrilege of throwing the doors of the International open to the toiling masses of the subject countries who have not been properly proletarianized — have not directly received the baptism of the hell-fire of industrialism. Corrupted by their contact with the bourgeoisie, which for a century has grown fat by colonial plunder, the leaders of the Second International failed to see that the Chinese coolie, the worker in the Javanese Sugar industry, the Malay toiling as slave in the Rubber Plantations, the Indian peasant producing food and raw materials, the Egyptian fellah growing cotton, not to mention millions of industrial, transport and marine workers of those countries, form as vital parts of the world capitalist economy as does the European proletariat. The continued existence of the capitalist system largely depends upon the ability to prevent the union of all these forces of production into a world-wide organization. For the first time in the history of the working class movement, the importance of the union of the proletariat in the advanced countries with the colonial toiling masses has been emphasised by the Communist International.

This should be clearly kept in mind at this moment, when the question of "Proletarian Unity" is on the order of the day. It should not be forgotten that, to be effective, the unity sought should not be European unity, but truly international unity—World Unity. For the Russian Unions, and the Unions affiliated with the R.I.L.U., it is obvious. They fully appreciate the necessity of drawing the organized workers outside of Europe (America included) into the International, and of organizing the unorganized. The reminder is meant particularly for those other partisans of unity. In Hamburg as well as in Hull, the question was mentioned. It was indeed a happy augury. But all the practical work remains to be done. This applies also to a great extent to the R.I.L.U.

Leaving aside the masses of agricultural workers and artisans in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, which constitute a powerful prop to world capitalism, the relation with the industrial workers can be immediately taken up.

This has a direct bearing upon the situation in the metropolises. Marine transport, Mining, Metallurgy, and Textile are of particular interest. Until all the Chinese, Malay, Indian, Arab and Negro workers are organized and the same wages and labour-conditions as enjoyed by the White workers, are secured for them, the employers will stand on a vantage-ground, because of their ability to draw upon the unlimited reserve of cheap and unorganized labour. Over 200,000 men, women and children are employed in the Indian mines, mostly coal. The conditions under which they work and the wages they get are simply incredible for the European proletariat. Sreuous efforts are being made to develop coal-mining in India with state subsidy. If the International fails to help the Indian miners to organize and raise their standard of living to the European level, disastrous effects will be felt in Britain. British capitalists are losing ground in the Mediterranean and Asiatic markets, because they cannot compete with German coal, mined by cheap labour. If this situation continues, they will retaliate by falling back upon the ten times cheaper labour and the practically untouched coal-deposits in India. In consequence, unemployment and wage-reductions will take place in the British coal mining industry. Even the German, Belgian and French miners will not go unscathed; because the present Indian wages are very much lower than the depressed continental wages. Coal raised by such cheap labour and transported in bottoms manned by equally cheap lascars will sweep the Asiatic and Mediterranean markets.

As regards the metallurgical industry, it is again from India that the danger of immediate rivalry comes; although the potentiality of China is very great. Nearly 250,000 hands are employed in this industry in India, apart from dockyards and railway workshops. The Indian steel and iron industry has been granted the protection of a high tariff, as well as of a bounty. English imports cannot compete in the Indian market with Belgian and German manufactures. Therefore, attempts are made to throw out the cheap continental import by still cheaper native production. The starvation wages of the Indian metal workers will thus serve as a weapon to beat down the wages not only in Britain, but on the continent as well. The only retaliation is to accentuate the struggle to bring up the Indian wages to the European level. This can be done by organizing the Indian workers as a part of an International Union.

By means of cheap and unorganized labour, the textile industry of China, India and Egypt has already cut sufficiently deep into the economic conditions of the Lancashire workers. There is a steadily growing export of capital from England to be invested in the textile industry in those countries, particularly India. In jute-textile, Calcutta has already become a deadly rival for Dundee. The organization of the textile workers in China, India and Egypt is the only means of resistance to the capitalist scheme of reducing the British workers to submission by the threat of continued unemployment. The Lancashire Unions, under the leadership of Mr. Tom Shaw, have hitherto supported the imperialist policy of obstructing the growth of the Indian textile industry by imposing a heavy excise duty on native produce while the import from Britain was free. The argument was that cheap produce in India would under-cut English wages. It was simply to help the British bourgeoisie to exploit India, in consideration of secure wages for the Lancashire cotton operatives. Nevertheless, Bombay has become a menace to Lancashire, then there is also the Japanese competition to meet. British capitalism has found it necessary to change its imperialist policy. It proposes to avail itself of the cheap labour of India. It will not be grateful to Mr. Tom Shaw for the prolonged services which were a violation of working-class solidarity.

The necessity for a World Proletarian Unity can thus be added to ad *infinitum*. Not only the final overthrow of Capitalism, but the immediate necessity of an effective resistance to the capitalist offensive demand that this Proletarian Unity must transcend European limits, and become a World Unity. The partisans and pioneers of proletarian unity should liberate themselves from the quasi-imperialist traditions of the Second International, and organize themselves into a true International, giving real significance to the historic slogan "Workers of the World, Unite".