

**DOCUMENTS OF THE HISTORY  
OF THE  
COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA**

**VOLUME III-C**

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**PEOPLE'S PUBLISHING HOUSE**

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## PREFACE

It is with a heavy heart we present this 1928 volume. Our beloved *Doc*, comrade *Gangadhar Adhikari*, is no more with us to guide us at every step in editing these documents. His was a lifelong service to the communist movement which he had first joined in the middle twenties in Berlin where he was a brilliant student of science. He was one of the foremost builders and leaders of the Communist Party of India from 1928 onwards. He had decided to devote the last phase of his life to make available the documents which provide one of the most essential source materials for writing the history of the Communist Party of India.

It was in this last phase of his life that intense personal bereavements and even, unfortunately, the loss of his eyesight occurred. But nothing could daunt him. The titan that he was, he worked till the very last, inspiring all of us with his advice, with his personal genial temperament, his never-failing paternal affection to younger comrades and always full of the mirth, humour and joys of life.

He had completed the first eight chapters of this 1928 volume, including the writing of the Introduction to it, which we have decided to collect separately as Part I of this volume.

The documents we are presenting here in Part II of this 1928 volume are based on the work which he could not complete. But he had already helped to arrange most of these documents which we have collected here as Part II and had left behind indications both verbal and written as to which of them need to be produced in the volume

in full and which are to be used for reference purposes only.

Following closely his instructions, but adding whatever has to be done for this period covering Part II, which extends from July to December 1928, ie from the Sixth Congress of the Communist International to the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress, we divide this period into these broad heads:

I. VI Congress of the Communist International (from 17 July to 1 September 1928), but we concentrate naturally on those documents only which have a bearing on India.

II. The Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress from 26 to 31 December 1928 and the activities of the 'Independence for India League' arising out of the deliberations of the Madras session of the Congress (1927), where the Indian National Congress has declared its goal to be 'complete national independence' for India.

III. The all-India Conference of the Workers and Peasants Party in Calcutta from 23 to 28 December 1928.

IV. The Calcutta meeting of the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of India, held under semi-illegal conditions, minutes of which are available.

The Introduction to this Part II has been written entirely by us without the benefit of Doc's advice and guidance.

DILIP BOSE

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# **PART I**



# 1928

## INTRODUCTION

### I

#### NEW PHASE OF INDIA'S NATIONAL MOVEMENT

A new phase of India's national movement for independence opens with the entry on the political arena of the mass activities of the class-conscious organisations of workers and peasants. This is the keynote of the two articles with which we open this volume devoted to 1928. This is the year in which the militant trade-union movement emerged as a new mass force led by the workers and peasants parties. These parties, as we have seen, arose first in Madras (1924), then in Bengal (1926) and in Bombay (1927). It will be remembered that one of the charges against the communists arrested in the Kanpur Bolshevick Conspiracy Case was that they were trying to form workers and peasants party.

In 1928, as we shall see, these parties were formed in the Punjab, in UP and in Ajmer-Marwara. The communists took the initiative to build these parties, firstly, as a legal forum to bring all those together who were coming forward to build militant class-conscious organisations of workers and peasants to conduct their struggles for their urgent demands and, secondly, to unite all those who were seeking to give a national revolutionary program of action to the freedom movement.

This is the year of the great textile workers' general strike of Bombay which resulted in the formation of the Bombay Girni Kamgar Union (Red Flag). This is the year

of the militant strike of EI Railway workers (Lilooah workshop) and jute workers' strikes in Bengal. This is also the year of the South Indian Railway workers' strike in which its leaders M. Singaravelu and Mukundalal Sarkar were sentenced to 10 years' RI.

In short, it was the year of the emergence of the red-flag movement of the workers and peasants in which the militant trade-union movement which came forward in the above-mentioned massive strikes was the main force.

The writer of the first article (Document 1) is Ghulam Ambia Khan Luhani, who hailed from Sirajgang, now in Bangladesh. He was associated with the Indian revolutionaries who contacted the leaders of the Communist International in 1921.<sup>1</sup> In later years, he was working with the Indian communists abroad and followed the developments in India and contributed articles to international journals. Clemens Dutt, the author of the second article (Document 2), was the elder brother of Rajani Palme Dutt. He was in close touch with M. N. Roy and helped him to maintain contact with the communists in India. His activities and his articles on India in the *Labour Monthly* and other journals made him a *persona non grata* with the British authorities, who refused him a visa when he wanted to visit India in 1927. Both of them, recording their impressions in February and March 1928, shrewdly anticipated the emerging trend of events, which, as we have seen, was already visible in the strike struggles of the latter part of 1927.

The massive participation of the workers of Bombay in the "Boycott-Simon-Commission!" movement was yet to take place when Luhani was writing his article. But he was able to record the decision of the municipal workers of Bombay in this connection and the refusal of their union to slide back despite threats of the authorities. He refers to similar proposed actions by the dock and railway workers of Bombay. Luhani refers to the "Workers and

1. See *Documents*, Vol 1, p 254.

Peasants Party ... functioning in the principal provinces of India as the legal political organisation of the proletariat and the peasants" and quotes from its manifesto on the royal commission.<sup>2</sup> That manifesto correctly warned the national leaders not to quibble over the personnel of the commission but to see the point that the appointment of such a commission by a foreign power is a violation of the right of selfdetermination, which is the inherent right of every nation. It quotes from *The Masses*, edited by M. N. Roy, which had put forward the slogan of a national constituent assembly. The Workers and Peasants Party had already put forward that slogan in its manifesto to the Madras session of the Indian National Congress (December 1927).<sup>3</sup>

Luhani also refers to the Punjabi monthly journal *Kirti*. The issue which he saw abroad must have been one of the latter part of 1927. Because when it started in February 1926, its title page did not carry the red flag he refers to. All the issues of 1926 and those of 1927 up to August have a coloured picture depicting garlands being placed on a martyr's body. At the top there were two lines which said, "Dedicated to the memory of the martyrs who came forward in those days when the work for the cause was more difficult than it is today." There was also another slogan on the front page addressed to the workers: "With your own hands you will have to work for the cause (of your liberation)." Curiously enough the first page inside carried the slogan "Om Guruprasad", invoking blessing of an unnamed guru (teacher).

The founder and editor of this monthly throughout 1926 was Bhai Santokh Singh of the Gadar Party. Looking through the contents of the first volume one sees that they are such as to inspire the reader to take up the organisation of workers and peasants so that they play their role in the national revolutionary movement of the country. The very first issue (February 1926) contains a report of

2. See *Documents*, Vol III B, pp 281-82.

3. *Ibid*, pp 301-6.

the first communist conference held in Kanpur in December 1925 with extracts from the speeches of Hasrat Mohani and M. Singaravelu. There are a series of articles on the British coalminers' strike and the 1926 great general strike of British workers. There is an article by N. M. Joshi on the trade unions in India, and on the strike struggle of 1926. There are articles from the pen of Agnes Smedley describing the sufferings of the Indian revolutionaries who were forced to emigrate. That the group around the magazine was in touch with Communist Party of India, is proved by the fact that in its October issue, it reports about the proposal to hold the second communist conference and the request to S. Saklatvala to preside over the same, a proposal which, as we have seen, was ultimately dropped.

From 21 January 1927 Sohan Singh Josh assumed the editorship of the magazine. The change in the get-up of the title page took place from the September 1927 issue. Josh recalls that Punjabi communists abroad did not appreciate the earlier title page and they sent another one designed by them. This showed a worker and a peasant standing hand in hand, while on the top is a red flag with the *hammer and sickle*. It was a three-coloured picture. Still later, another picture was put on the title page, which showed a worker destroying with his hammer a whole hill—the hill bearing the title "Old order of exploitation."

The *Kirti* issues of 1927 reflect the events of that year. They contain articles on Saklatvala's visit to India, on the first conference of the League against Imperialism in Brussels, on the May meeting of the CPI in Bombay. It contains reports on the release of S. A. Dange and of Shaukat Usmani. It gives life sketches of the prisoners of the famous Kakori case. The June issue appears with thick black borders, mourning the passing away of Bhai Santokh Singh and was devoted to his life and work. This issue contains a photograph showing the body of Bhai Santokh Singh lying in state, sitting round it are Bhai Visakha Singh, Bhai Inder Singh, Jathedar Karam Singh Cheema and standing

behind are Bhai Sohan Singh Josh and the members of Bhai Santokh Singh's family.

The "Notes and Comments" in the June issue contain interesting items. A note on "*The Red Flag*" says: "Whatever the colour or race to which one may belong, the Russians consider all toiling men to be their own class brothers and concede to them equal rights. That is why everyone is today talking of red flag and the workers particularly love the red flag." "This red flag", says the note, "calls upon the workers of all lands: 'Workers of the world, rally round me. I shall lead you in your struggle for a society based on equality.'"

The June issue has an article on the history of the May Day, while the July issue has a note on the May Day meetings held in India that year, particularly in Bombay and Madras. In a note referring to S. A. Dange's statement on his release from jail it quotes: "The government may want to know whether I have changed or have become softer than before. I would like to tell the government that I am the same staunch bolshevik, the same staunch communist as before. I firmly stand by the same program and principles that I held before." The comment of the magazine on this is: "In the words of Sambamurthy, we also wish that India should produce thousands of Danges, so that the present society can be changed and in its place a new society worthy of human beings is born."

Issues of October, November and December 1927 contain several articles on the 10th anniversary of the October Socialist Revolution in Russia, on the 8th session of the AITUC, the Chinese struggle for freedom, and how Punjabi policemen in China left British service and went out to support the Chinese revolution. It contains an article on the boycott of Simon commission and finally in February 1928 it reports about a workers' public meeting in which the Simon commission is condemned and the call to organise the workers and peasants is given. The contents of the *Kirti* for 1926 and 1927 show that the group round it was popularising the same political program and line which the

workers and peasants parties in Bengal and Bombay were putting forward, and in 1928, with the formation the Naujavan Bharat Sabha, and later of the Kirti Kisan Party, the communists in the Punjab started their mass activities.

Luhani's comment on *Kirti* is quite justified. The successive changes in the get-up of the title page also record to a certain extent a progressive change in the contents. It should be recorded here that young Bhagat Singh, a member of Naujavan Bharat Sabha, was working as a subeditor in the *Kirti* office in early 1928 when Sohan Singh Josh was acting as the editor-in-chief after the passing away of Santokh Singh. After the formation of the Kirti Kisan Party of the Punjab in 1928, *Kirti* became the cultural and political organ of the party. Later in April 1928 its Urdu edition was started. In 1928 Abdul Majid started *Mehnatkash*, which was more directly devoted to the trade-union and workingclass movement. It was also an organ of the Kirti Kisan Party of the Punjab. We have already stated that the workers and peasants parties in Bengal and in Bombay had their respective weekly organs: *Ganavani* in Bengali edited by Muzaffar Ahmad from Calcutta and *Kranti* in Marathi edited by S. S. Mirajkar from Bombay in 1927 and by Dange when it was restarted in 1928.

Luhani, characterising the new phase, refers to the big workingclass actions of 1927, viz the BNR workers' strike and the oil workers' strike in Madras. He pointedly refers to the initiative of the militant rank-and-file leadership in both these strikes as a new feature. He also refers to a WPP member being in touch with the BNR strike and to the move of the workers to contact the unions on other railways to bring about an all-India railway general strike in solidarity with the struggle of the BNR workers if their just demands are not conceded. An offensive of retrenchment and victimisation against the militant mood of the workers on all railways was launched by the railway authorities and by the British government. Discontent on the SIR, where a strong union existed, was brewing.\*

4. For Joglekar's participation and report see *ibid*, p 266.



These and similar rank-and-file actions in the oil workers' strike in Madras are the precursors of bigger events—the great textile strikes in Bombay (April to October 1928), the jute and municipal workers' strikes in Calcutta, and the great SIR workers' strike in Madras to be described in this part further on.

Clemens Dutt's article focuses attention on another aspect of the new phase, viz the decisive left-wing turn in the national-liberation movement as reflected in the resolutions and the decisions of the Madras session of the Indian National Congress in December 1927.

This article which appeared in the March 1928 issue of the *Labour Monthly* was actually written in the middle of February after the author had received the full press reports of the Madras session. Analysing radical resolutions passed there—on complete independence, on war danger, on the support to the freedom struggle of the Chinese people, and greetings to the Russian people on the tenth anniversary of their revolution—Clemens Dutt refers to the action of the rank-and-file of the Congress in bringing about this shift to the left. He also refers to the role of the Workers and Peasants Party members, who were working in the Indian National Congress, in bringing about that shift. In this connection he also refers to a draft resolution-cum-program for the National Congress put forward by the WPP member K. N. Joglekar before the May 1927 session of AICC held in Bombay, which put forward the demand for complete independence and a charter of anti-imperialist, antifeudal, democratic demands.<sup>5</sup>

Clemens Dutt's article is addressed to the rank-and-file of the British Labour Party. It sharply criticises the compromising role of the British labour leaders who are not prepared to concede India's right to selfdetermination and independence and points out that the militant section of the British working class will support this demand in solidarity with the left-wing of the Indian national freedom

5. Ibid, pp 169-73.

movement and with the organised workers and peasants of India who are now emerging as an independent political force in India.

Both Luhani and Clemens Dutt state in their articles that though the national bourgeois leaders are putting forward anti-imperialist "national demands" now in the most advanced form of complete independence, they are not prepared to lead the masses into revolutionary mass action to implement it. On the other hand they will seek the pressure of the mass movement to achieve a compromise with British imperialism on the basis of "dominion status" within the British empire. We have seen how the same analysis was made by Rajani Palme Dutt in his booklet *Modern India* (1926) and by M. N. Roy in his pamphlet *The Future of Indian Politics*.<sup>6</sup>

It should be pointed out here that simultaneously with this article published in the *Inprecor* of February 1928, Luhani had contributed a very long and detailed article to the *Communist International*—the official organ of the Comintern—which was published in two parts in its issues of January and February 1928.

In this article entitled "Developments in the Political Situation in India", Luhani quotes figures showing the growth of textile and jute industries, iron and steel, railways and shipping together with workshops, docks and ship-building yards connected with them. He takes an exaggerated view of the growth and character of the industrialisation that was taking place between 1914 and 1926. British finance capital is the main factor initiating and dominating this development for the purposes of colonial exploitation of India in the interest of imperialist Britain. Indian capital has been taking increasing share in this, thus becoming a growing force to be reckoned with. In this situation and when British capitalism in crisis at home was unable to export more capital to India, Indian capital will be able to take a growing share in the process of industrialisation. In this

6. Cf *Documents*, IIIA. pp 113-54.

way a theory is put forward that British imperialism, facing a crisis at home, is reversing its policy of keeping India an industrially backward colony; it is now allowing Indian capital to participate in this process of industrialisation as a junior partner of British imperialism. Thus the Indian national bourgeoisie, its demand for industrialisation being met to a certain extent by the grace of British imperialism, joins the ranks of the counter-revolutionary forces of British imperialism and Indian feudalists for the joint exploitation of Indian masses. India's liberation revolution is therefore to be carried out by the broad anti-imperialist antifeudal united front of the workers, the peasants, the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie and the rural poor. This is in fact, the theory of decolonisation, solemnly put forward in a long article by Luhani in two above-mentioned issues of the official organ of the Comintern, which came up for discussion at the sixth congress of the Comintern.

We are not reproducing this article because Luhani was not the author of this theory. Reference to "decolonisation" occurs in a document written by M. N. Roy at the end of 1927 after his return from China. This document is produced in a later section where the whole question of India's industrialisation was discussed at the sixth congress of the Comintern.

It should be mentioned here that in an article published in the *Communist International*, July 1928, ie before the sixth world congress opened, Clemens Dutt had firmly repudiated the so-called theory of decolonialisation. In this article: "India's Part in World Revolution", he points out that there had been a certain modification in the policy of promoting Indian industries pursued during the first world war. This modification became particularly noticeable during the postwar crisis when British finance capital took certain financial and fiscal measures which sharply affected India's industrial development. He writes:

"The policy of concessions has given place to the policy of the mailed-fist, to forcible demonstration of the supremacy of the British power.

“In examining the economic background for this policy, it should be noted first that in spite of the shocks occasioned by the war and postwar crisis, British imperialism has been successful in maintaining all key positions of control in its hands. *There has been no decolonisation of India!* (emphasis added). India remains a classic example of a colonial country exploited to the full by foreign imperialism. Especially the monopolist hold over currency, banking and finance generally, and over foreign trade, with predominance in industrial production and the direction of internal trade, serve to secure the position registered politically in subordination to the British parliament and control from the India Office in London.”

## II

### BOYCOTT OF SIMON COMMISSION

We have already recorded the hostile reaction of the Indian public opinion as reflected in the resolutions of the Kanpur session of the AITUC (November 1927) and the Madras session of the Indian National Congress (December 1927) to the appointment of a statutory commission for India by the British parliament. In mid-February 1928 the Indian Legislative Assembly rejected the official motion to appoint a committee to cooperate with the Simon commission by 66 to 59 votes. Meanwhile preparations were going ahead to observe hartal and demonstrations against the commission when it would land in Bombay on 3 February 1928.

The Workers and Peasants Party started its preparations for the campaign of boycott soon after its leaders returned from the Madras session of the Congress. Even a “Manifesto of the WPP of India on the Boycott of the Simon Commission” was drafted by Muzaffar Ahmad and Philip Spratt in the first week of January 1928 in which the idea was put forward to couple the boycott campaign with the demand for convening a constituent assembly. However, this

document was neither adopted nor published as stated by Muzaffar Ahmad. Still the prosecution produced it as evidence in the Meerut trial.<sup>7</sup>

The first document (Document 3) in this section is the resolution on the boycott adopted by the enlarged meeting of the executive of the WPP of Bombay on 29 January 1928. Its main purpose was to prepare for united mass campaign and actions on 3 February when the commission was due to land in the Bombay port.

This enlarged meeting was attended by 36 sympathisers apart from the members of the executive. Prominent among the members of the executive present were: D. R. Thengdi (president), S. S. Mirajkar (secretary) as well as R. S. Nimbkar, K. N. Joglekar and S. A. Dange.

Among the sympathisers present were S. H. Jhabvala (later a veteran labour leader), A.A. Alve and Babu (B.T.) Alve (later worker-leader of the famous G.K.U.), Kulkarni (D.B.?) and Zulmiram Chowdhury (both of G.I.P. Railway Workers' Union), Sadanand (of the Port Trust Workers' Union), Ushatai Dange and a woman municipal worker (both of Municipal Workers' Union) and a peasant from Junnar taluk who accompanied them. Those working among the youth and students who happened to be present at the meeting were Yusuf J. Meherally who was later to become a prominent congress-socialist leader, one Sringarpure, then active among the students, and two students from the Wilson College. Leading sympathisers present were T. V. Parvate and V. H. Joshi, close associates of S. A. Dange, who were earlier active in the Kanpur case defence committee organised in Bombay for him; A. B. Khardikar, who later secretly went to Moscow, and after his return was variously active for the party till his death and has done valuable work in translating Marxist materials from Russian journals; and finally C. G. Shah, Marxist intellectual and writer, who also later in life remained a sympathiser of the party.

7. *Ibid.*, pp 129-32.

This impressive list gives us an insight into how the WPP had a wide circle of cadres and sympathisers in the existing trade unions and student and youth organisations and among intellectual circles and how meticulously it was preparing for the anti-Simon-commission demonstration by mobilising all these forces for a united workingclass action.

On the eve of the landing of the commission in Bombay both the provincial congress committee and the WPP (Bombay) which were closely cooperating in the boycott campaign, issued their respective manifestos. R. S. Nimbkar, a prominent member of the WPP executive was at that time the secretary of the BPCC and K. N. Joglekar, another member of the executive, was a BPCC member. R. S. Nimbkar's account of the boycott campaign, reproduced here (Document 4) gives us an idea of how this joint action of the Congress and WPP was carried out.

The manifesto of the WPP issued to the press in Bombay by its secretary, S. S. Mirajkar,<sup>8</sup> and his account of the campaign (Document 5) brings out sharply the prominent role the working class and its open political party, the WPP, played in this national campaign. In accordance with its resolution (Document 1) the WPP *firstly*, emphasised India's right to selfdetermination and complete independence and coupled the national hartal action with the militant strike action of the working class in which the organised municipal and textile workers played a prominent part. Youth and student movement which was already playing a significant role in giving the national freedom movement a revolutionary turn, played a big role in this national campaign. In Bombay it was the youth and student demonstration which went to the Alexandra Docks to show black flags to the commission on landing, defying the police bandobast, marching back to the meeting, they burnt the day's copy of the *Times of India* which had criticised the boycott campaign.

3 February was declared an all-India protest day. Meet-

8. Ibid, pp 281-82.

ings and demonstrations took place in other cities as well. This attracted considerable attention in international circles. *The Masses of India* carried an article in the issue of April 1928. *Inprecor* also produced an analytical news report entitled "The Protest movement against the Simon Commission in India",<sup>9</sup> by G. A. K. Luhani, which we are not reproducing here. Both these articles, apart from giving an appraisal of the role the communists and the WPP played in the national campaign to boycott the Simon commission, gave a rough picture of countrywide character of this movement. At the time these articles were written the writers had only very few contemporary press reports before them.

Newspapers reported that protest hartals, demonstrations and meetings took place in all the principal cities of India—Calcutta, Madras, Lahore, Lucknow, Delhi, in all the 14 districts of Central Provinces and also at Peshawar.

In Calcutta a hartal was observed and no business was transacted at the share and jute markets. About 50 volunteers were arrested on 3 February 1928. Again on 20 February, the Bengal provincial congress committee organised a protest meeting which was preceded by processions with the slogans 'Go Back Simon!' 'Boycott Foreign Goods!' etc.<sup>10</sup>

In Madras the hartal was a complete success. There were clashes between the police and the demonstrating masses in which 17 persons were injured, one of them died later in the hospital. In a boycott meeting in the afternoon of that day presided over by Satyamurthi, police repression was condemned and a boycott resolution adopted.

In Lahore a huge all-party protest meeting was held under the chairmanship of Duni Chand.

Peshawar observed a total hartal and a joint meeting of hindus, muslims and sikhs presided over by Abdul Ghaffar Khan adopted the boycott resolution.

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9. *International Press Correspondence (Inprecor)*, Vol 8, No 8, 16 February 1928.

10. All these facts are taken from newspaper reports quoted from *Simon Commission and Indian Nationalism*, by S. R. Buch.

It is not true that in October 1928 when the commission paid its second visit the national boycott campaign was dropped. In Lahore a massive demonstration organised by the Punjab congress committee and the Naujavan Bharat Sabha, and led by the veteran nationalist leader Lala Lajpat Rai was brutally lathi-charged by the British police. The lathi blow received by Lalaji later led to his death on 17 November 1928. A feeling message from Romain Rolland referring to this incident and sent to the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress, is in the record of Meerut case in the French original. Its English rendering reads thus:

Villeneuve (Vand)  
4 December 1928

Dear Sir,

Here is the copy of the message that I had sent on 26 November in two copies: to Jawaharlal Nehru and to the Indian Friends to be given to the president of Indian National Congress.

The day when I wrote this letter I knew about the death of Lajpat Rai who was my friend and whose intrepid character and high political intelligence I admired. But I was not yet aware of the cause of his death on which the English Press was silent.

Now as I know it, I request you to add to my message the expression of my grief and my indignation for that dastardly assassination.

With best wishes.

ROMAIN ROLLAND

The protest demonstration in Lucknow, in which Jawaharlal Nehru and G. B. Pant were hurt in a police lathi-charge, took place in November 1928.

In October S. S. Mirajkar sent a protest telegram to Sir John Simon which the Bombay telegraph office refused to accept. Later Mirajkar sent it to him by post with a covering letter. The telegram and the accompanying letter form Document 6 of this section.



Mirajkar in his Meerut case statement explains how this letter and telegram sent by post to Sir Simon appeared as a prosecution document in the case. It was not intercepted by the police like many other documents, but was handed over to the CID by the private secretary of Sir John Simon as admitted by the prosecution witness himself.

When the commission arrived in Calcutta in the middle of January 1929 a hartal and massive demonstration took place. About the role of party in this Muzaffar Ahmad writes:

“On Saturday last a big demonstration passed through Calcutta streets to protest against the arrival of Simon commission. Our party took the most prominent part in it. We came out with red flags and party slogans in black and white. Aftab and another member were arrested on the spot for carrying a poster inscribed with the ‘Long Live Revolution!’”<sup>11</sup>

Actually it was a joint demonstration in which the Bengal provincial congress committee, Bengal provincial trade union congress and other organisations of students and youth joined together with the WPP.

According to Dharani Goswami, the WPP took the initiative to organise the demonstration together with the BPCC, and other organisations. “Subhas Chandra Bose, then leader of the Bengal provincial congress committee, had already contacted some of us for discussion on the question of jointly organising an anti-Simon-commission demonstration. We discussed with him threadbare. He assured us of full cooperation in rendering all necessary help on behalf of BPCC.”<sup>12</sup> Though Muzaffar Ahmad was not agreeable to have a joint demonstration with the BPCC, the WPP Bengal executive, by a majority, decided upon the same and went ahead with the preparation.

“...And a massive demonstration took place in which

according to the *Statesman* report (which appeared in its next day's issue) about 2 lakh had attended. This mighty demonstration panicked the British."<sup>13</sup>

### III

#### CRITIQUE OF THE "NEHRU CONSTITUTION" OF THE ALL-PARTIES CONFERENCE

The national boycott-Simon-commission campaign not only challenged the right of British parliamentary commission to draft a constitution for India but asserted that the right belonged to the elected representatives of the people of India. The Workers and Peasants Party, in its manifesto to the Madras session of the National Congress, had clearly stated that the right belonged to a national constituent assembly. It had stated that: "India must demand an absolute unrestricted national constituent assembly, elected by universal adult suffrage, which shall be the supreme organ for expressing the will of the people. Nothing short of that can be accepted. India must become a democratic country."

But the Madras session of the National Congress had not accepted the proposal that a swaraj constitution could only be prepared by a constituent assembly elected on the basis of adult suffrage. It had instead adopted a pragmatic approach and had passed a resolution directing its working committee "to draft a swaraj constitution on the basis of a declaration of rights and place it before a special convention to be convened in Delhi". The same resolution defined the composition of the convention as follows: "The AICC and the leaders of other political, labour, commercial and communal organisations and the elected members of the central and provincial legislatures."

Such a conference was convened in Delhi on 12 February 1928 and became known as All-Parties Conference. It

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13. *Ibid.*

held its preliminary meetings from 12 February to 11 March 1928. Invitations were also received by the AITUC, WPP and the CPI (Bombay) as representatives of labour.

As we see from N. M. Joshi's letter (25 January 1928) (Document 7), no representative of the AITUC<sup>14</sup> seems to have been present at the opening of the All Parties Conference at Delhi. But it is on record that the WPP issued "An Open Letter to the All Parties Conference" (Document 8) which is dated 10 February 1928 and the text of which was a prosecution exhibit in the Meerut case. Readers will see that the document takes the same position towards the drafting of the constitution for India which is explained in the document "Labour and Swaraj".

The AITUC, the premier organisation of working class, anticipating the move of the national bourgeois parties, had adopted a resolution at its eighth session at Kanpur appointing a subcommittee "to draw up a labour constitution for the future government of India which should be presented to the executive council and the working classes". The subcommittee consisted of Dewan Chamanlal, N. M. Joshi, P. Spratt, S. H. Jhabvala, Kishorilal Ghose, S. A. Dange, D. R. Thengdi, M. Daud and G. Sethi with P. Spratt as the convener of the same.<sup>15</sup>

In pursuance of this resolution N. M. Joshi, the then general secretary of the AITUC, wrote a letter to P. Spratt (25 January 1928) stating that as the subcommittee of which he is the convener, cannot meet before 12 February, when the All-Parties Conference is opening at Delhi, it will not be possible to present any proposal committing the AITUC on the question before that time (Document 7).

In his covering letter forwarding his views on the functions of the subcommittee and the draft of "Labour and

14. AITUC office-bearers for 1928 were: president C. F. Andrews; vice-presidents—Dhoondi Raj Thengdi, M. Daud, MA, BL, Dr Biswanath Mukerjee; general secretary—N. M. Joshi, MLA, JP; assistant secretaries—R. R. Bakhale, S. A. Dange; treasurer—F. J. Ginwala, MA, LLB, MLC. See also *Documents*, Vol III-B, p 96.

15. *All India Trade Union Congress Bulletin*, Vol 4, Nos 6, 7, 8, December 1927–January and February 1928, p 76.

Swaraj” to the subcommittee members Spratt explained why he had not prepared a labour constitution but instead a document laying down the principles of the same from the point of view of the working class. This covering letter explains the point as follows: “I think it is premature and useless for us to draw up full draft of a constitution but we may usefully make a statement defining the political policy and program of the Congress. I enclose also a rough draft of such a statement.” This draft mentioned here is the document “Labour and Swaraj”, and the covering letter was written on the eve of the meeting of the executive council of the AITUC taking place in Delhi on 26 February 1928. In this he writes to the members of the subcommittee: “If you are at Delhi for the executive council meeting on the 26th, I should like to discuss it with you there. If not, will you please let me know by letter what you think of this, and make any suggestion you have to bring forward. I have written to Mr Joshi proposing this procedure, instead of calling a special meeting of the subcommittee, at any rate for the present.” This covering letter, contained two enclosures: (1) Functions of the Subcommittee and (2) Draft of “Labour and Swaraj”.

The date 26th here is obviously 26 February 1928, when the executive council of the AITUC actually met in Delhi.<sup>16</sup>

It also proves that the documents “Labour and Swaraj” and “Functions of the Subcommittee” were drafted in the latter part of January 1928.

The two drafts mentioned above are reproduced here (Document 9).

In the document “Functions of the Subcommittee” Spratt clarifies the point he has made in his covering letter where he states the ultimate aim of labour is socialism and this being so a “labour constitution” can only be the constitution of an “independent democratic socialist republic”. Therefore, at the present stage when the working class and the toiling masses are struggling for the complete independence and

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16. *Ibid*, Vol 4, No 9, March 1929.

democratic rights for the people of the country, the only thing possible and necessary was to draft a comprehensive statement of the political attitude and policy of labour towards this national struggle.

In his draft "Labour and Swaraj" Spratt is formulating the general principles of a swaraj constitution from the point of view of the working class and in terms of the left-wing pronouncements and resolutions of the All India Trade Union Congress. At the outset he points out that the AITUC, the premier organisation of the working class, cannot remain aloof from political struggle. The economic struggle in the course of its development becomes a political struggle against the economic, social and political exploitation and oppression of the country as a whole by foreign finance capitalism, ie by imperialism. He points out that Dewan Chamanlal in his presidential address before the last session of the AITUC (Kanpur, November 1927) had put forward the same idea forcefully. Spratt quotes the following concluding part of Chamanlal's address: "I call upon you, comrades, to raise the banner of your ideals demanding *nationalisation of land and industry, a civilised existence, a government of the workers, and economic system for the benefit of humanity and peace*. The road is long but your ideal is worth the travail. May you prosper upon your arduous journeyings!"

On the pronouncement and resolution of the AITUC, Spratt proceeds to outline the basic framework of a swaraj constitution from the point of view of the working class. If the swaraj constitution is to fulfil the demands and the aspirations of the 98 per cent of the people of India and not of 2 per cent exploiting vested interests, it must be one which ends the economic and political exploitation and oppression of the country and its people by foreign imperialism and by Indian feudal princes and landlords and also by Indian capitalists. In this sense, the draft "Labour and Swaraj" asserts that the constitution of a completely independent India must enable the people of India to implement socioeconomic transformations and secure for the people democratic rights and liberties.

Later, it appears, this draft was criticised by a section of the subcommittee as "onesided". Spratt's reply in essence was that it was not only anti-imperialist and antifeudal but anticapitalist as well, in conformity with the interest of the working class which the AITUC represented (see letter dated 6 December 1928, Document 10). Though the draft document was circulated to all the members of the subcommittee, including Chandrika Prasad who was added to it later, it is not known whether the subcommittee accepted the same. Spratt refers to a comment received from one member to which we have referred to above. This was probably from Chamanlal, which is rather surprising in view of the fact that the draft based itself on the official pronouncement and resolution of the AITUC including the presidential address of Chamanlal himself. The draft, however, served as a guideline for the drafting of a critique of the Nehru committee's report on swaraj constitution.

The draft was preserved and received publicity because it was seized by the police from the papers of Spratt and WPP, Bengal and Bombay, and was produced as a prosecution exhibit in the Meerut conspiracy case against Spratt.

In his explanation, Philip Spratt, in his defence statement in the Meerut case, not only gives the full list of the subcommittee but also what happened to the draft later. He says: "I prepared a draft and sent copies to all the subcommittee members. But I received only one reply namely from Chamanlal. I do not think any other member or the subcommittee ever mentioned the thing to me. I made an attempt to call a meeting of the subcommittee at Jharia itself. But that was found to be impossible. Eventually a short resolution was drafted by Chamanlal so far as I know without consulting the other members, and was moved and passed."<sup>17</sup>

The All Parties Conference, which was convened on the initiative of the working committee of the Indian National Congress, was attended by the representatives of all the

17. Spatt's Statement, Meerut Record, P 425.

political parties of India as well as the representatives of the Indian commercial and industrial interests.

This conference, after the preliminary lengthy discussions in its several meetings in Delhi between 12 February and 11 March 1928, met again in Bombay on 19 May 1928. The representatives of the WPP and CPI Bombay who, as we have seen, were invitees to the conference, attended this meeting of 19 May in person which they were not able to do earlier. The report of the propaganda group signed by S. S. Mirajkar as convener records that Dange, as the leader of WPP delegation, intervened in the debate on the resolution appointing the subcommittee to draft the principles of the constitution. The report records: "Mr S. A. Dange in a vigorous speech made it clear to those present that the conference was nothing but mere farce. The accredited representative of the party ultimately voted against the resolution of electing a committee to draft the future constitution in accordance with the party mandate. It was however necessary while voting on the proposition to make clear the position of the party and clearly point out what it stood for; that being not done then a statement why the party representatives voted against the resolution was issued to the press."<sup>18</sup> This statement, which was probably published in the press, has not been located. It is easy to see that the statement must have reiterated the position of the WPP of Bengal as explained in its statement on the All Parties Conference (Document 11), that only a constituent assembly elected by adult suffrage is the proper organ to frame the constitution of India.

It is at this meeting that a subcommittee was appointed to consider several questions connected with the constitution such as the communal question and the creation of provinces on linguistic basis and on that basis to draft "the principles of swaraj constitution". Pandit Motilal Nehru was the convener of the constitution committee, the other members being Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sir Ali Imam, G. R. Pra-

18. Meerut Record, P 1348(2).

dhan, Shuaib Qureshi, M. S. Aney, M. R. Jayakar, N. M. Joshi, Sardar Mangal Singh and Subhas Chandra Bose.

A resolution directed this committee to "consider and determine the principles of the constitution for India before 1 July next". This resolution further says that "the All Parties Conference will meet again early in August 1928 to consider the committee's report".

The report produced by this committee, later known as the Nehru committee, was submitted on 10 August 1928 and was also published in the press as well as made available to the public in a book form for discussion at the All Parties Conference and by the general educated public.

After receiving the printed copy of the "Nehru Report" laying down the "principles of the swaraj constitution" both the WPP Bengal and AITUC subcommittee mentioned earlier produced their respective criticism of the same (Documents 10 and 11).

The critique of the Nehru committee report on principles of the swaraj constitution, made by the WPP Bengal and by the AITUC subcommittee run on parallel lines and stress more or less the same points.

The statement of the WPP Bengal represented the views of WPP Bombay as well as both the organisations had held their respective conferences early in the year and adopted identical resolutions on the general political situation and on mass organisational issues.

At the very outset the WPP correctly points out that the exercise of producing a swaraj constitution or its principles agreed by all parties and interests of India was futile if the purpose was to submit it to the British parliament and get it accepted by its imperialist leaders. The central issue was the transfer of power from the British imperialist rulers to the people of India. The former, however, will never concede this willingly unless they were forced by an indomitable struggle of the vast masses of the people. Hence what was needed at present was an agreed charter of demands and a program for unleashing a united anti-imperialist struggle for independence, democracy, for transfer of power to the people of India, so that they win freedom to frame the



constitution of a sovereign and independent India based on the charter and program.

The WPP rejects the whole approach of the report and points out how the whole document is pervaded by an abject spirit of loyalty to the king and the foreign British rulers and is a repudiation of India's right to selfdetermination. In short, the basic approach of the critique of the all-parties report made by WPP and AITUC is that it betrays the militant anti-imperialist spirit that pervaded the countrywide boycott-Simon-commission movement, and that the Indian National Congress was departing from its goal of complete independence adopted at its Madras session. Accepting dominion status as our goal, and pledging loyalty to the British king-emperor meant accepting the stranglehold of British capital over our economic resources and political life which spelt backwardness and slave status for our country. The committee's report acquiesces in Indian army remaining under British control. The WPP and the AITUC condemn this as a gross betrayal of the anti-imperialist traditions of the national movement which protested against the use of the Indian army against the Chinese people fighting for their freedom.

Both the WPP and the AITUC point out in their documents that the inscription of fundamental rights, adult suffrage etc. and responsible government for the people of British provinces as well as of the princely states, is of little value because the committee's report simultaneously accepts the overlordship of the British imperialists and of their underlings, the feudal princes and statutory landlords. Even the fundamental rights as enumerated in the committee's report are inadequate as they significantly ignore the right to strike.

Both the documents refer to the communal question which occupies a considerable part of the Nehru report and comment that the basic solution of this lies in the common struggle of the working class and the toiling people against imperialism and feudalism as well as against capitalist exploitation. At the same time, they welcomed the redistribution of provinces on a linguistic basis and re-

alignment of the princely states along the same lines after the abolition of the rule of feudal princes.

Though both the documents cover more or less the same ground in their critique of "Nehru report" the AITUC draft, which was probably made later, contains more precise formulations. For instance, sharply repudiating specious arguments of the Nehru committee that there was hardly any difference between dominion status and independence, the AITUC draft says: "India under dominion status will still be subject of British financial, commercial and industrial exploitation, to British military control and therefore (as the report in fact admits by retaining the king as the nominal head) to British political control."

The AITUC draft further assessed the poor performance of the All Parties Conference and its report in the following trenchant generalisation: "The All Parties Conference has failed to carry out its function of leading the people of India in a mass movement towards freedom, has merely been the occasion for the reestablishment of unity among the bourgeois parties, on the basis of a most *timid and reactionary program*" (emphasis added).

The AITUC draft puts forward the socialist republic as the ultimate aim of the working class. At the same time the AITUC critique rejects as "unsuitable" the All Parties Conference's report as a basis for a "temporary agreement" between the political parties and the patriotic classes of India for the achievement of a program of struggle for independence and democracy.

The AITUC considers "that the opportunity, provided by the present political situation, for establishing a real popular movement for independence, based on an agreed program, should not be wasted. Instead, therefore, of the unrepresentative and exclusively upperclass All Parties Conference, the Trade Union Congress advocates that there should be called together a really representative conference or constituent assembly of the people of the whole country for the formulation and propaganda of popular demands and of mass action. The program suggested above

(in the statement "Labour and Swaraj") would serve as a basis for this."

There is also an article by M. N. Roy published in *Inprecor*<sup>19</sup> which is not reproduced here.

M. N. Roy in his article entitled "The Indian Constitution" commented upon the principles of the swaraj constitution set forth in the Nehru committee's report. He had not before him at the time the full text of the report but only a "purport" of the same published in the *London Times*. He also emphasises that a new phase has opened in the Indian freedom struggle with the adoption of the independence resolution by the National Congress and with the country-wide boycott-Simon-commission demonstrations, and points out that the demand for responsible government under the British crown by the parties of the Indian bourgeoisie was in sharp contrast to the militant mood of the rising mass movement in the country. He quotes British imperialist press organ *London Times* and *Calcutta Statesman* which appraise the document as admirable and reasonable. This is because, he points out, the draft constitution, accepts dominion status "under British sovereignty" and assures full protection to British capital invested in India, which also means the acceptance of British monopoly of Indian trade and the virtual acceptance of "imperial preference". Demands made in the draft constitution may represent a certain advance over the present position but even these demands the British imperialists would not accept without a mass struggle. He points out that even the leftwing petty-bourgeois leaders are not supporting this treachery of the Indian bourgeois leadership and call upon the revolutionary petty-bourgeois trend to ally with rising workers' and peasants' movement to fight that compromise in the struggle for independence. There are certain inaccuracies in the article. In the original subcommittee appointed, as stated in the report, there were not "four swarajists apart from Motilal Nehru" but only two. Shuaib Qureshi and Subhas

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19. *Inprecor*, Vol 8, No 64, 24 August 1928.

Chandra Bose were the two other swarajists. N. M. Joshi, AITUC general secretary, was in the subcommittee but he neither attended its meetings nor signed the report.

The critique is not so concrete and precise as that of the AITUC and WPP Bengal and Roy's characterisation of Subhas Chandra Bose as representing the fascist wing of the petty-bourgeoisie, is incorrect and irrelevant in the context of this development.

True, the AITUC draft takes a positive note of the demand for linguistic states put forward in the Nehru committee's report, but neither the WPP nor the leftwing of the AITUC had at that time come to understand the significance of this demand for a democratic solution of the communal problem. The AITUC draft, therefore, did not note the significant fact that the parties of the national bourgeoisie were basing their demand on the principle "of the wishes of the people and the linguistic integrity of the region concerned". The Nehru committee report applies these principles to the question of separation of Sind from the then Bombay presidency by pointing out that 74 per cent of its population which is muslim as well as a section of the hindu population are in favour of such a separation. The cases of Baluchistan and North-West Frontier region which were somewhat similarly situated, is well known. Being border regions the British rulers discriminated against them for their imperialist military strategic reasons, perforce to counter the so-called bolshevik menace from the north, and deprived them of even the meagre rights and concessions which the other British provinces enjoyed at that time. The Nehru committee's report had demanded that these regions must be treated on the same footing as the rest of the provinces. This fact has also escaped the notice of the AITUC draft though it had "also the same significance" in the solution of the communal question as in the case of Sind at that time.

In accordance with the resolution of the Jharia (ninth) session of the AITUC (Document 12) a delegation headed by its president M. Daud, attended the all-parties convention on the second day, when the Nehru committee's re-

port on the draft constitution came up for discussion. The convention, which was the last act of the All Parties Conference, was designed as a prestigious gathering representing the widest possible nonofficial public opinion to adopt its draft constitution. Its official report mentions that AITUC was invited, as the representative of labour, to send 50 delegates. CPI and WPP were invited, not as political parties but as representing labour, to send 5 delegates each. The UP Kisan Sabha and Bihar Kisan Sabha were also invited. These latter were at that time small organisations led by leftwing congressmen.

M. A. Jinnah, who at that time had already given up his earlier nationalist stand, and the Muslim League, had not cooperated with the All Parties Conference. It is on record that some attempt was made to contact them. The Muslim League was holding its conference at that time in Calcutta and Jinnah was also present there. But the effort did not bear any fruit.

When the second day's session of the convention opened the president announced that since certain amendments on Indian princely states were not ready, the first part of the draft would be taken up and called upon J. M. Sen Gupta to move the resolution on dominion status. After the resolution was moved it was opposed by Srinivas Iyengar on behalf of the Independence of India League and by M. Daud on behalf of the AITUC.

Srinivas Iyengar read out a written statement on behalf of the League saying that it cannot agree with the convention to prepare a swaraj constitution based on dominion status as it goes against the mandate of the Madras session of the National Congress which was to draft the constitution on the basis of complete independence. But the Independence League will participate in the convention to evolve a solution of the communal question. They claimed their stand was the same as that of the resolution which the AICC adopted at its Delhi session in November which ran thus:

“This meeting of the AICC adheres to the decision of the Madras congress declaring complete independence to be the

goal of Indian people and is of the opinion that there can be no true freedom till the British connection is severed. This committee accepts the recommendations of the Nehru committee as agreed to by the Lucknow All Parties Conference for the settlement of the communal difference. This committee specially congratulates the Nehru committee for their labours, patriotism and farsightedness, and, without prejudice to the resolution of the Congress relating to complete independence, is of the opinion that the recommendations of the Nehru committee are great steps towards political advance and without committing itself to every detail generally approve of them."

In short the leftwing congressmen were taking a dual stand. They were generally supporting the efforts of the All Parties Conference, while registering their dissent on the question of dominion status. Among the signatories of the statement were the following:

Srinivas Iyengar, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose, Kiran Sankar Roy, Sarat Chandra Bose, Satyamurthi, Sambamurthy and Siva Prasad Gupta.

The AITUC president for the year, M. Daud in his brief speech read out the full text of the resolution adopted at the Jharia session of AITUC and stated that the AITUC delegation would not take any further part in the convention if the demands set forth in the resolution are not accepted. It will be seen that the resolution generally follows the critique of the Nehru committee's report made by the WPP, Bengal, and by Spratt's draft made for the AITUC subcommittee.

The main defect of M. Daud's intervention was that he failed to demonstratively put the weight of the AITUC in support of those who were striking out for complete independence while demanding full democratic rights, and putting forward an anti-imperialist antifeudal program. Socialist republic ought to have been put forward as the "ultimate" aim of labour as stated in Spratt's draft. There was, however, an interesting episode in the convention, which served to emphasise the militant rejection by the

working class and its organisation—the AITUC, of the compromising stand of dominion status. After Daud had finished his speech, Chandrika Prasad, an ex-president of the AITUC, was called upon to speak. He began by saying that the AITUC fully supports the Nehru committee's report. As soon as he said this members of the AITUC delegation rose up in angry protest and shouted that he was not representing the AITUC. The result was that Chandrika Prasad had to conclude his speech with the admission that he was expressing his own opinion.

Eight days later a massive demonstration of thirty thousand workers carrying red flags, marched to the Congress pandal which was in the vicinity of the convention pandal and warned the congress leaders—"No Dominion Status—Stand by Complete Independence!"

#### IV

#### THE "ASSEMBLY LETTER" AND THE CONTROVERSY ROUND IT

We are reproducing here the full text of the so-called Assembly Letter (Document 13) which was published in the *Statesman* of Calcutta on 18 August 1928 and in *London Times*, in extract, on 26 of the same month. The British government of India was responsible for leaking it out to the press and made it known that the letter emanated from M. N. Roy, though it was not signed and the text was headed "To the CCs of the CPI & WPP". Later it figured in the proceedings of the autumn session of the Legislative Assembly on 10 September 1928, copies of which were laid on the table. Further, in the Assembly J. F. Crerar, the then home member, stated: "It is addressed in the outer cover 'to be delivered personally to Muzaffar Ahmad, 2/1, European Asylum Lane, Calcutta.' The words 'to be delivered personally to' have been expunged and the cover bears the postmark of Aden, the 16th May." He was introducing the notorious "Public Safety Bill" an arbitrary mea-

sure calculated to deport British subjects without trial on the mere suspicion that they were assisting the Indian communist movement.

It is clear that the letter was in the hands of the government long before it was published in the press and that it never reached the person to whom it was addressed and naturally provoked suspicion about its authenticity. This is confirmed by the letter which Muzaffar Ahmad addressed to the *Statesman* soon after the "Assembly Letter" was made public for the first time in the columns of the paper. In this he states: "In connection with the letter said to have been written by Mr M. N. Roy to the Communist Party and Workers & Peasants Party of India and published in your issue of 18 August, I am instructed that no letter in any way resembling this has ever been received by the parties named. I have also to inquire from what source your correspondent at Delhi obtained the letter, and what authority he had for giving it publicity. My committee considers that it, in common with the other provincial committees of the Workers and Peasants Party, and the committee of the Communist Party alone can authorise the publication of their private correspondence."<sup>20</sup>

The *Statesman* published the letter with a sarcastic title "Red & Green" and mischievously added the comment: "We have yet to learn that letters written by one of the king's enemies with the avowed object of stirring up armed revolution and civil strife are entitled to any privilege on the ground that they are private correspondence."

This was characteristic of the tone with which the Anglo-Indian press in India and the British imperialist press in London publicised the "Assembly Letter" in a propaganda campaign demanding action against the militant working-class and communist movement in India.

Soon after the letter was published by the *Statesman* in India, the *London Times*, on 26 August, published extracts from the "Assembly Letter" with the meaningful comment that "the recent publication of M. N. Roy's letter to the

20. Meerut Record, D 148(6).



communists in India has directed public attention to the *evil relation* of the Indian labour movement with international bodies of similar character". This is obviously calling for repression of Indian workingclass organisations for merely keeping in touch with international workingclass bodies.

Meanwhile, S. V. Ghate issued a statement<sup>21</sup> to the press from Bombay on 25 August 1928 on behalf of the CPI confirming the stand taken by Muzaffar Ahmad. The statement said in parts: "...the Roy letter is only an invention of the imperialist press for creating an atmosphere favourable for the introduction of repressive legislations in the form of Trades Disputes Bill and Public Safety Bill in the country."

On behalf of the WPP a similar statement<sup>22</sup> had been issued about the same time which compared the alleged "Roy Letter" to the notorious "Zinoviev Letter" which the tory imperialists used in England to bring about the fall of the labour government in 1924. This statement in part says:

"...the 'fake Roy Letter' [is] said to have been addressed to the Workers and Peasants Party. The imperialist government, with the aid of the capitalists, Indian and foreign, wants to suppress the growing awakening amongst the masses of India, as evidenced in the countrywide discontent and unrest that has culminated in spontaneous strikes all over the country. The cry, therefore, has gone forth that the communists have been ruining the country, its industries and what not. But the peaceful methods adopted by the Workers and Peasants Party in the country have not given an opportunity to the government to bring into action all its instruments of oppression on the workers' front.

"*Thirsting for Communist Blood*: While the Bengal Chamber of Commerce has been clamouring for the ousting of the *foreign agitators*, others of their class have been thirsting for communists' blood. The government, as if in

21. Meerut Record, P 549 (20).

22. Ibid, P 549 (19)—emphasis added.

obedience to the wishes of these classes, has promised them to bring its 'oppressive' bill at the next session of the imperialist legislature. Unfortunately for the government, the Trades Disputes Bill has had a hostile reception by the nationalist press.

*"Strangle TU Movement:* The Workers and Peasants Party believes that this letter is an invention of the capitalist press to make a strong case for the introduction of the Trades Disputes Bill, to once and for all put an end to the only legitimate method of strike."

In the beginning of September the publication of the "Assembly Letter" and the controversy round it attracted the attention of Jawaharlal Nehru. In an interview<sup>23</sup> to the *Free Press of India*, on 1 September he said:

"When this letter was published in press I could not, of course, say whether it was genuine or not. I do not know what Mr Roy's views may be in regard to communist work in India. It struck me peculiar, however, that this letter which is said to be dated some time in December last should suddenly be given publicity 8 months later. On the face of it the letter contains statements which appeared improbable. The manner and time of publication increased the element of suspicion. The Trade Disputes Bill and the so-called anti-bolshevik measure coming at about the same time made it clear that the publication was designed to frighten a number of people and thus facilitate the passing of measures. The cablegram I received from Berlin<sup>24</sup> stating that after inquiry it has been found that the letter is a fabrication, justifies the suspicion that it raised. I trust that no one will be deluded by this letter, whether it is genuine or not.

"The two new measures introduced by government are objectionable and should be opposed. The trade-union

23. Ibid, D 148(5), emphasis added.

24. Ibid: Lucknow, 1 September (FPI): "Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has received a cable from the League against Imperialism in Brussels which says that the alleged M. N. Roy's letter recently published is an absolute fabrication."

movement in India is very young and the Trades Dispute Bill endeavours to weaken and cripple it in its infancy. This cannot be willingly permitted. I am glad to say the Congress working committee today has expressed strong opinion against both these measures."

About the same time, that is on 29 August, M. N. Roy himself sent a letter from Moscow repudiating the letter ascribed to him which was published in the *Bombay Chronicle* on 15 September 1928 under the heading: "M. N. Roy's Challenge to Government: Produce the Original Letter—Reference to Jawaharlal a 'Downright Lie'."<sup>25</sup>

"Sir,—Some days ago the *Times* correspondent from Delhi cabled what was purported to be extracts from a letter written by me to the central committees of the Communist Party and Workers & Peasants Party of India. According to the report, this letter, alleged to be written by me, was dated some time in December last year, but made public by the police only a few days ago. In a subsequent message to the *Times* dated 26 August, it is stated that in this fictitious letter I mentioned Jawaharlal Nehru 'as liaison agent between Moscow and India'.

"I hereby declare that I did not address any such letter to anybody in India. The statement about my referring to Mr Nehru 'as liaison agent' is a downright lie. I challenge the government of India to produce the original of this mysterious letter with my signature.

"Obviously this latest 'letter of Roy' has been invented as a pretext for the proposed legislation against the communists. A cable to the *Times* dated Simla, 24 August, gives a purport of the Public Safety (Removal from India) Bill, and says: 'The recent publication of M. N. Roy's letter to the communists in India has directed public attention to this evil relation of the Indian labour movement with international bodies of similar character.' If this letter proves the necessity for new repressive legislation, why

25. Ibid, P 1887.

has the government been sitting tight on it all this time since December?

“Hoping that the elected nationalist members of the Assembly will throw out this repressive measure.—yours, etc. M. N. Roy.”

\* \* \*

As has been mentioned earlier, the “Roy Letter” figured in the autumn session of the Legislative Assembly on 10 September when the home member J. F. Crerar used it as a support when he was introducing “The Public Safety (Removal from India) Bill” which would enable the then British government of India to deport any British European subject on the mere act of helping communist and trade-union activities in India. The “Roy Letter” was placed on the table of the library of the Assembly and thereafter became known as the “Assembly Letter” together with an alleged manifesto of the CPI which was an exhibit in the Kanpur bolshevik conspiracy case of 1924.

As soon as Crerar rose to move the Public Safety Bill and before he could begin his speech Pandit Motilal Nehru raised a point of order stating that the Legislative Assembly, being subordinate to the British parliament, had no power to pass law restricting the rights of a European British citizen residing in India. Such a citizen derived those rights from the Magna Carta and other historic enactments of the British parliament and the Indian legislature has no power to make a law restricting these rights. Therefore, the Assembly, Motilal Nehru argued, had no power to enact a law restricting his rights to freely reside in any part of the British empire including India which the bill sought to do.

The bold argument Motilal Nehru put forward in defending his point of order and the numerous authorities he quoted from British legal literatures put the government and its law member, S. R. Das, in confusion. They pleaded that they had no notice of this point of order and wanted time. Das tried to argue that the president had no power

to rule out an official bill *ultra vires*, at least, he urged, there was no precedent of that kind in any of the dominions.

In the course of the short discussion that took place, even a loyalist nonofficial member like Sir H. S. Gaur had to admit quoting precedence that the Legislative Assembly was not competent to pass such a legislation and conceded that the president had the right to declare a bill *ultra vires*.

It was at this point that the president, Vithalbhai Patel intervened and said that the point of order raised by Motilal Nehru was very important and he could not give his ruling immediately and he wanted more time for consideration. But, as he did not want to hold up the proceedings he allowed the home member to move the bill and also allowed the debate thereupon to proceed.

Moving the bill Crerar indulged in a demagogic attack on the communist movement of India as destructive of the whole social fabric of the country as it exists today. In an attempt to drive a wedge between the national movement and the communist activities, he made a pointed reference to the massive workingclass strikes taking place at the time in the industrial centres and on the railways. In an oblique reference to the international solidarity and assistance which the Indian working class was receiving from the international workingclass movement, he hinted at the "hand of Moscow" and of the "Communist International" without naming them. In fact in his anticommunist tirade he was anticipating the notorious opening speech of the prosecution counsel Langford James in the Meerut conspiracy case which was to come six months later. He also quoted a manifesto of the CPI, which he alleged was an exhibit in the Kanpur bolshevik conspiracy case of 1924.<sup>26</sup> He also read out extracts from the "Assembly Letter".

There are two references in Crerar's speech which need

26. We have not been able to locate this document from the list of exhibits in the Kanpur bolshevik conspiracy case and identify the quotation.—G.A.

to be commented upon in order to know the specific object of the bill at the time. He refers firstly to George Allison alias Donald Campbell and says: "It was he who first started the formation of workers and peasants parties in active form." This is not historically quite accurate. As we have already pointed out in the earlier volumes that this idea was first put forward by M. Singaravelu and S. A. Dange who were thinking of forming a Labour Kisan Party towards the end of 1923. In the Kanpur conspiracy case (1924) Dange and others were charged of trying to organise a workers and peasants party. At the end of 1925 a Labour Swaraj Party was formed in Calcutta which was renamed later as the Peasants and Workers Party of which Muza-ffar Ahmad and Qazi Nazrul Islam were the founders together with others. George Allison (Donald Campbell) came to India in the beginning of 1926 and was in Calcutta towards the end of the year and was in contact with Muza-ffar Ahmad and other labour leaders. He would have surely approved of forming the Workers and Peasants Party to politically guide the work of the militants in the trade-union movement. But the Indian communists, as we have pointed out in earlier volumes, were already groping forward towards this idea and attempting to give it a practical shape even before Allison came to India. It will be remembered that Allison was a wellknown British communist and a popular leader of the miners. We have also seen that he had come to India with a passport under the name of Donald Campbell. He had to do this in order to foil the illegal efforts of the government authorities in Britain to prevent him from getting a visa for India on his passport. But the Scotland Yard in Britain and the British police authorities in India through their "intelligence" service found this out and seized his passport in Calcutta and arrested him for using a false passport. This was at the end of 1926. He was brought to Bombay and put on trial for the above mentioned offence and sentenced to 18 months' rigorous imprisonment. He did most of his jail term in Yervada Prison in Poona.

The jail term was to be over some time in June 1928 after

which he could have remained in India as a free citizen keeping in touch with Indian communists and members of the Workers and Peasants Party and helping in their trade-union activities. There was no law in the Indian statute book which could enable the British police authorities to restrict his right to do this in any way. So, the British authority resorted to a stratagem. A couple of days before the date of his release they took him out of jail in Poona and brought him to Bombay under police custody and put him on a P&O liner in the Bombay Port which was to sail for England on that day. They released him on the steamer just when it was about to set sail it and the police got off the ship. Thus it was made impossible for George Allison to remain in India after his release.

In his speech Crerar also refers to "Other British communists—in fact two others"—who "came and whose [communist] activities have been continuously carried on for the last year and a half to the very great detriment, as I believe, of the country."

This refers to Philip Spratt who came to India in December 1926 and to Ben Bradley who came later in September 1927. Both these comrades came with their legal passports and were openly in touch with Indian communists and leaders of Workers and Peasants Party and helped them in their trade-union and other political activities.

The Public Safety (Removal from India) Bill, which Crerar was moving for the purpose of removing Spratt and Bradley from India by a legislation, was, as Motilal Nehru pointed out, bad in law as it violated the various historic enactments of the British parliament.

When Crerar in the course of his speech began quoting from the "Assembly Letter", Ranga Iyer interrupted saying that the authenticity of the letter is being denied by the alleged author. Crerar, answering the intervention, stated: "I saw in a Reuter's telegram a statement—whether correct or not I cannot vouch for—that the British Communist Party had addressed a reproach to Mr M. N. Roy to the effect that he had given ground to government to take action by the introduction of compromising matter of

this kind. The answer which the Communist Party is alleged to have received is that the letter was not written by M. N. Roy."<sup>27</sup>

This is an interesting fact. It may be that the CPGB, when it saw the extracts of the "Assembly Letter" in the *London Times* of 26 August, taking it as genuine, might have addressed a letter to Roy criticising him for allowing such a document to fall in the hands of the imperialists.

These facts contained in a Reuter message, quoted by Crerar, cannot be taken as a proof of the authenticity of the letter which will be discussed later.

In the course of the debate, Amarnath Dutt quotes another Reuter dispatch of 4 September stating:

"Reuter learns that Mr M. N. Roy has informed the London branch of the Indian National Congress that he did not write the letter mentioned in the message of 1st September."

Amarnath Dutt also quoted at length from Jawaharlal Nehru's statement and condemned it as a forgery like the notorious "Zinovief" letter which he said was a device resorted to by the imperialists when they want to bring forward repressive measures against popular movements.

Another swarajist member, Ranga Iyer, casting doubt on the authenticity of the letter, argued that the document whether fake or genuine was brought in here by the authorities to support a thoroughly illegal measure to deport men like Spratt. If the "Assembly Letter" was a seditious document why no action was taken against a paper like *Statesman* which printed it, he asked. Turning sarcastically to the home member he said: "Must those, I ask, who do not sing that old song of 'Rule Britannia' be deported? Mr Spratt, sir, is as honourable a gentleman as I could find on the opposition benches... I know he is a pleasant man to talk to and if he is such a dangerous character, is not the law strong enough to proceed against Mr Spratt? That is the man they want to catch. They want to deport him without delay. That accounts for the anxiety of honourable the

27. Assembly report, 10 September 1928, *Proceedings*, p 447.



home member. They want to deport him just as they deported another gentleman, an Englishman, from Bombay."

As for the bill, it was ruled *ultra vires* by the president, Vithalbai Patel, after the debate was over on 24 September 1928. Thus it could not be used for deporting Spratt and Bradley.

Here it is necessary to briefly sum up the further history of this bill. When the bill came up again as amended by the official select committee, the voting on the motion was 61 for and 61 against. The president, V. J. Patel, cast his casting vote against the motion and the bill was rejected.<sup>28</sup> It was reintroduced in April 1929 when already the Meerut conspiracy case against 31 communists and trade-unionists had started. As Ben Bradley later said in the statement before the Meerut court:<sup>29</sup> "The president of Legislative Assembly refused to allow a debate on it, on the grounds that such a debate would adversely affect this trial. However, the government were not going to be so easily baulked a second time. They were determined to make this law at all cost. It was, therefore, certified by the viceroy by an ordinance." Bradley also stated that mysterious documents were unearthed in support of the bill, obviously referring to the "Roy Letter" which figured also in the Meerut conspiracy case.

As soon as the "Roy Letter" was intercepted by the police at the end of May and opened and read its content, they began their investigation recognising its importance. The envelope which was addressed to Muzaffar Ahmad bore in the corner the inscription "To be delivered personally"<sup>30</sup> which was scratched out. On the back of the envelope was the name of Abdul Hakim with his Calcutta address. Attempting to trace him at that address the police came to know that Abdul Hakim, who lived there, was a seaman-khalasi working on foreign bound ships starting from Calcutta Port and was at the time on the high seas.

28. *India in 1928-1929*, pp 6 and 7.

29. Bradley's Statement, p 644.

30. Meerut Record, P 377(E).

So, they alerted the police authorities of the ports of Calcutta and Bombay to detain and search Abdul Hakim whenever returned. According to the police report later submitted in the Meerut conspiracy case, Abdul Hakim returned to the Bombay Port on 10 September 1928 and was detained and searched. The search list and the evidence was recorded before a presidency magistrate of Bombay. The information so obtained was later produced in the Meerut conspiracy case by making Abdul Hakim a prosecution witness. He admitted that he had posted the abovementioned envelope at Aden on 16 May 1928. Further confirmatory evidence was found in his trunk. There was a small cover addressed to Muzaffar Ahmad which contained the following letter dated 8 February 1928 signed by N. J. Upadhyaya, secretary-organiser of the Indian Seamen's Union, 88 East India Dock Road, London E 14<sup>31</sup>:

"Just a few lines to introduce Mr Md Abdul Hakim of 6, Shah Aman Lane, Calcutta.

"He has shown great care about the welfare of the Indian workers and I hope you will find the conversation very interesting; also we would very much like to know your opinion about this comrade.

"Please find a letter from CPD [Clemens Palme Dutt] and reply."

This letter became a prosecution exhibit in the Meerut conspiracy case and the story of this and the other letters was related in the evidence of Abdul Hakim as prosecution witness who was also crossexamined on behalf of the accused.

The story may be briefly told as summed up by the sessions judge in his judgement.<sup>32</sup>

I. "PW 28 M. A. Hakim is a seaman who has been working as a cabin steward in steamers of the British India Steam Navigation Company for 9 or 10 years. In November 1927

31. *Ibid*, P 378. This was found in the possession of Abdul Hakim, PW 28—Dy Inspector Chowdhury, PW 262, searched Hakim—search list, *ibid*, P 1596.

32. Meerut Case Judgement by Sessions Judge, Vol 1, p 182.

he signed on as a cabin steward in the S.S. Merkara of that line and arrived at London after Christmas. At the docks there he met a Mr Upadhyaya whom he described as the secretary of the Indian Seamen's Union, London, who persuaded him to join the union and gave him a card of membership (P 376) which he signed in the witness's presence. After visits to various other ports the Merkara returned to London on 7 or 8 February when the witness met Upadhyaya again and was entertained by him at a teashop on two occasions. On the second of these Upadhyaya gave the witness two envelopes, a large one (P 377 E), and a small one (P 378 E). He was asked to take these to Muzaffar Ahmad at 2/1, European Asylum Lane, Calcutta, and to deliver the small one to him first and then the large one if he asked for it. Witness took the letters back to his ship and put them in a writing pad inside his box. When, however, he reached Calcutta about 20 March he forgot to deliver these letters and left them lying in his box. A little over a month later he signed on in the S.S. Margha for a voyage to Southampton and after leaving Colombo came across the letters still in the writing pad. He then thought the best thing to do was to post the big envelope to Muzaffar Ahmad and accordingly took it to the purser who told him to scratch out the words "to be personally delivered". He also wrote on the back of the envelope his own name and Calcutta address, a very usual practice among Indians writing letters in India. The letter was then posted in the box on the ship and despatched to India from Aden.

II. "Abdul Hakim returned from England in the troopship Nivasa on 10 September 1928, his box was searched by customs and police officers and the letter (P 378) was found in his possession. That letter bears the same signature N. J. Upadhyaya which appears on the Indian Seamen's Union membership card given by N. J. Upadhyaya to Abdul Hakim at the docks in London. This letter would establish, even if it were not already established by the typewriting, that (P 377) signed 'J' emanated from C. P. Dutt."

During the Meerut case trial the communists continued to repudiate the authenticity of the letter as they were doing

earlier before their arrest, when the letter was first seen in the press.

When Abdul Hakim was put up by the prosecution to prove the authenticity of the letter he was closely cross-examined on behalf of the communist accused. The witness was asked whether he was sure that the alleged "Roy Letter" now produced by the prosecution and identified by him was actually in the cover which was given to him by Upadhyaya and which he posted at Aden. His answer revealed that he was not sure about it. This answer elicited from the witness was used by the accused to suggest that the evidence of this witness did not prove the authenticity of the letter and that a forged letter might have been replaced in the cover by the police in the long period during which it was in their hands.

Thus Muzaffar Ahmad in his defence statement in the Meerut Case states the following about the "Roy Letter":<sup>33</sup>

"I cannot see how I could in any way be made responsible for the exhibit P 377, the famous 'Assembly Letter'. The alleged writer of the letter M. N. Roy himself disclaimed it through the press. The PW 28, Abdul Hakim, who was alleged to have been entrusted with the letter in London to have it delivered to me personally did arrive in Calcutta, was discharged from the ship and stayed there for 2 months and yet he did not care to deliver the letter to me though I could be found quite easily. My place was well known to workers and seafarers. Abdul Hakim was not a man who might be entrusted with hundreds of commissions in London. If this single piece of work was at all entrusted to him nobody can believe that he could forget to deliver it to me. If the letter was posted at Aden I do not know why it was not passed to me after being photographed as is usually done by the CID. The whole letter is a faked one. It was meant to justify the introduction of the Public Safety Bill in the Legislative Assembly of India which was apparently meant to drive away comrades Spratt and Bradley from India."

33. Statement of Muzaffar Ahmad, p 495.

S. V. Ghate in his defence statement also denounced it as a forgery.<sup>34</sup> "In connection with this letter I have to state that if the party called this letter a forgery there were good reasons for it. The nefarious tactics of the conservative party in England, which plotted the downfall of first labour government of England in 1924 by the now notorious 'Zinovieff Letter' forgery, were too fresh to be forgotten.

"The year 1928 saw a rising tide of strikes all over the country and in order to frighten the bourgeoisie and win them over completely to their side, this letter was given wide publicity and was discussed in the Assembly. This party took the only course it could at that time, of denouncing it as a forgery."

So far we have traced the history of this "Roy Letter" in the three stages it passed through, firstly, when it first came before the public through the columns of the *Statesman* on 18 August 1928 and in *London Times* a few days later, secondly, when it figured in the Legislative Assembly, and thirdly, when it appeared as a prosecution exhibit against the communists in the Meerut conspiracy case. In all these stages doubt was cast on the authenticity of this document not only by Muzaffar Ahmad to whom it was addressed but also later by its alleged author M. N. Roy as also by S. V. Ghate on behalf of the CPI and WPP.

It was during the Meerut conspiracy case that Muzaffar Ahmad, Ghate, Spratt and Bradley and other communists got the opportunity of carefully examining the letter, its cover and the covering letters connected with it. They also carefully evaluated the evidence given by the seaman Abdul Hakim before the sessions court, whom they carefully crossexamined. Assessing all these facts, that is the manner in which it was originally proposed to be sent and as well as by the contents of the same, the communists in the Meerut case had no doubt as to its authenticity. They took the only course possible for them at the time, both when they were free and later when they were prisoners,

34. Statement of S. V. Ghate, p 1586.

of repudiating it in view of the conditions of repression prevailing at that time.

They knew that N. J. Upadhyaya was a communist, a member of the CPGB, who was active in organising Indian seamen who worked in the boats plying between India and England. There was an Indian Seamen's Union in London of which N. J. Upadhyaya was the secretary. This union was looking after the welfare of the seamen while they were in London during their voyages. The confidential correspondence between Indian communists in Europe in touch with the CI and the CPI was in early years carried through a seaman who was also a committed communist. This was Ajodhya Prasad, who was later arrested in the Meerut conspiracy case and is a signatory to the general policy statement of the communist prisoners. It is on record that Ajodhya Prasad registered himself as a seaman-khalasi in the beginning of 1927 under the name of Abdul Hamid. He made several trips in steam boats plying between Calcutta and Bombay and ports in France and England. The technical arrangements for the exchange of correspondence and other materials between Indian communist leaders abroad, particularly the members of the foreign bureau of the CPI in Europe, and Communist Party leaders in Bombay and Calcutta, was functioning through 'Abdul Hamid'. At the French end Ajodhya Prasad was contacting the technical arrangement made by the foreign bureau which was operated by Mohammed Ali 'Sepassi'.

This arrangement seems to have functioned during the whole year of 1927 and the early months of 1928. At the time when this link was functioning the police had absolutely no knowledge of it. It was probably in the early months of 1928 that the police intelligence department who knew Ajodhya Prasad as a communist since 1926, came to know that he was identical with 'Abdul Hamid' the seaman-khalasi. Thereafter they traced from the shipping records both in Calcutta and Bombay that the successive trips which 'Abdul Hamid' made to ports in France and back. They suspected that he was operating the correspondence link and also bringing copies of the *Masses* from the French

ports. But they never got any direct evidence of this. They only surmised it through references in certain correspondence which was found with Spratt when he was arrested in September 1927 in the 'India and China' case. The references were in cryptic style such a "god's messenger", "boy has come back with messages and copies of the *Masses*, etc." Our purpose in referring to all these things here is to find out why the Roy Letter was not sent through this reliably functioning arrangement. The trips which Abdul Hamid made came to the knowledge of the police later from the abovementioned references in intercepted letters and from shipping records which also revealed to the police that 'Abdul Hamid' was actually Ajodhya Prasad. From these records, we know that 'Abdul Hamid' left the S.S. Elysia on 25 September 1927 and was in France for some months. Normally, he should have rejoined the ship when it sailed again from Marsailles on 7 January 1928. The prosecution further alleged that 'Abdul Hamid' went to the British consul in Marsailles reporting that he was left behind and requested to be sent back to India. However, there was a considerable delay on behalf of the authority to repatriate him which was done only on 2 March 1928. This delay is explained by the judge by saying that the permission for his repatriation had to be obtained from the Board of Trade in England.

We may surmise that he was detained in France by the foreign bureau apparatus because they were expecting at that time an important communication from M. N. Roy who, they must have known, had returned from China by that time.<sup>35</sup> Actually that communication was inordinately delayed and could not be available up to the time when S.S. Elysia sailed from Marsailles on 7 January 1928. Thereafter, the foreign bureau apparatus must have asked him to report himself to the British consul in France and get repatri-

35. *Man Who Looks Forward* by A. K. Hindi (Tyab Sheikh)—published in India in 1937, which is obviously based on account given by M. N. Roy himself, says that Roy returned from China in September, p 103.

ated. It appears that the "said important communication dated 30 December 1927", could only be available through Clemens Dutt, who must have reached after Abdul Hamid reported to the British consul.

It appears that when it arrived the communication apparatus must have found that Abdul Hamid had already reported to the British consul and it was not at all safe to send the letter through him. Under these conditions, it appears, that Clemens Dutt carried the letter to London with him to find out another reliable person to send it safely to Muzaffar Ahmad. In London, Clemens Dutt appears to have contacted N. J. Upadhyaya, who as we have stated earlier was a communist, a member of the CPGB and working among the Indian seamen. Upadhyaya seems to have promised Clemens Dutt that he could send the letter through a reliable seaman to India to be personally handed over to Muzaffar Ahmad. Upadhyaya not being well versed in methods of underground communication selected a seaman who was a literate and loyal unionist all right but had no political understanding whatsoever of the reason why the letter was sent by hand. He was also carrying other private letters of his colleagues and friends which were found in his box when he was searched on 10 September 1928 at Bombay. It was wrong on the part of Upadhyaya to send such a letter through seaman, Abdul Hakim, who was not politically conscious and did not understand, in this case, the importance of his mission. That is why he forgot to deliver the letter personally to Muzaffar Ahmad when he arrived in Calcutta and later on his next trip abroad posted it at Aden. All this account is based, as we stated earlier, on the evidence Abdul Hakim gave in the sessions court of Meerut conspiracy case. But there is an independent evidence to confirm that the alleged "Roy Letter" was sent through a seaman and was believed to be authentic by no less a person than Muzaffar Ahmad.

In 1963 Muzaffar Ahmad wrote a small Bengali book entitled *Samakaler Katha* (Contemporary Events). In this there is a chapter entitled "history of Two Letters" ("Dui



Khana Chithir Itihas"). The first letter he deals with is this "Roy Letter" and the tenor of the whole writing shows the reader that he believes it to be authentic. The opening paragraph<sup>36</sup> dealing with this letter runs as follows:

"A letter dated 30 December 1927 was written to the central committee of the Communist Party of India from Europe. This was a voluminous letter. Those who were to despatch the letter did not want to send it by post, as, if sent by post, there was every chance of the same being intercepted by the police. So the letter was sent to London so that it could be sent by hand and actually a good arrangement could be made there. A sailor from Calcutta agreed to deliver the letter to me at Calcutta. The name of the sailor was Abdul Hakim."

The last paragraph of this account brings out an additional fact that the despatcher sent the letter through an Indian seaman. It reads as follows:

"We did not have the least inkling that a voluminous letter had been sent to us through a sailor which ultimately fell into the hands of the police. London comrades were anxious to know the fate of the letter. Once they wrote to me 'perhaps you know a seaman who often comes here'. I did not understand anything. I used to know many such seamen. Centering round the letter the British government of India moved a draft bill in the Central Legislative Assembly of India. The bill was styled as 'Public Safety Bill'.<sup>37</sup>"

A new fact revealed here for the first time by Muzaffar Ahmad that he received a query from those who despatched the letter from London (through Abdul Hakim) saying "perhaps you know a seaman who often comes here". This query is an independent confirmation that this "Roy Letter" was sent through a seaman, evidently Abdul Hakim.

In an earlier publication entitled *The Communist Party of India and its Formation Abroad* published first in Bengali in September 1961 and its English edition in April 1962,

36. *Samakaler Katha*, p 42.

37. *Ibid*, p 44.

Muzaffar Ahmad refers to the "Assembly Letter" as an authentic communication, written by M. N. Roy from the headquarters of the Communist International after his return from China. He writes: "On 30 December 1927, M. N. Roy wrote a letter to the central committee of the Communist Party of India from the headquarters of the Communist International (this letter also mentioned the central committee of the Workers and Peasants Party). Roy had shown this letter to other leaders of the Communist International before it was sent. This happened after he had returned from his visit to China. In those days this letter became famous in India as the 'Assembly Letter'. It was exhibit P 377 (1) among the documents filed in the Meerut communist conspiracy case."<sup>38</sup>

Muzaffar Ahmad then quotes from this letter in support of his argument that the Communist Party of India was affiliated to the Communist International already in the years 1920 and 1921 and that this affiliation held valid when it was written at the end of 1927.

Later in his book *Myself and the Communist Party of India, 1920-1929* (published in March 1970) he has again referred to the question of affiliation of the party with the CI quoting once more from the "Roy Letter".

All this fully confirms that Muzaffar Ahmad considered this letter to be authentic, both with reference to its mode of despatch from London through the seaman Abdul Hakim and in regard to its content. However, it is significant that he nowhere refers in these three books that he himself, together with other concerned leaders, had cast doubt upon the authenticity of the letter both when it was first published in the *Statesman* and later appeared as a prosecution exhibit in the Meerut conspiracy case. This was probably because he was so convinced of the authenticity of the "Roy Letter" in terms of its content.

The prosecution proved the authenticity of the letter and of the covering letter by C. P. Dutta<sup>39</sup> by comparing the type

38. *The CPI and its Formation Abroad*, p 83.

39. Meerut Record, P 377 and P 377 (1).

face with that of other documents emanating from the same typewriter which have been otherwise proved. The "Roy Letter" itself was not signed by M. N. Roy but its authorship is proved by the nature of the contents and of the arguments therein and particularly by the personal reference in the opening paragraph.

The reference to the author of the letter being away, and that in his absence his correspondence was being handled by other comrades, can be interpreted as referring to M. N. Roy who was away in China in the second half of 1927, during which time we have on record some letters of Clemens Dutt addressed to comrades in India dealing with important issues dealt with in the letter. For instance, a reference to matters "of serious political nature" which demanded "consideration and consultation with other comrades" appears to be a reference to the question of the relation of CPI with WPP. This question is discussed in detail in the "Roy Letter". This also figures in some of the letters of Clemens Dutt to Spratt written during the same period. These letters were intercepted by the police and produced in the Meerut trial. In one such letter Clemens Dutt comments that the Communist Party and WPP appear to be much the same. This is exactly the complaint made in the "Roy Letter" where he writes that WPP "is too openly identified with the CP". This internal evidence was also used by the prosecution and by the sessions judge to prove the authenticity of the "Roy Letter".

Coming now to the text of the letter we find that in the first para the writer is referring to the fact that he was away from his headquarters for some time, that in his absence the correspondence was handled by other comrades and that he took considerable time to study the materials received in his absence and to give a considered reply to the problems raised.

It is known from independent sources that M. N. Roy was in China from February to September 1927 and that in his absence Clemens Dutt was conducting the correspondence. It is also known to us that by the time Roy returned

he and others had before them the annual report of the CPI published in June 1927. The workers and peasants parties in Bombay and Bengal had come into existence and had begun mass activities in trade-union and other fields. The reference here to questions requiring "mature consideration" is obviously the relations between CPI and the newly-emerging workers and peasants parties. We will discuss this question when we come to the reference to the same in this "Roy Letter".

The letter from Edward (ie, Muzaffar Ahmad) which Roy refers to in the second and third paras seems to have contained bitter criticism of M. N. Roy about the manner in which he was discharging his responsibilities to the party in India. Roy answers the criticism and explains how he is rendering every possible help to build a workingclass party in India. This letter of M. Ahmad is not found on record probably because it was not intercepted and produced in the Meerut case. Muzaffar Ahmad has made even sharper criticism about M. N. Roy in his book *The Communist Party of India and its Formation Abroad* where he says that having been placed in a position of high responsibility in the Communist International he could not maintain the revolutionary dignity of his position due to his lack of integrity which dragged him down.<sup>40</sup>

In the same place Muzaffar Ahmad also refers to the expulsion of M.N. Roy which, however, took place some time later. But at the point of time when Roy wrote the letter he was correctly emphasising the political necessity of international solidarity on behalf of the world working class on the one hand and the admirable selfreliance of the Indian working class which was expressing itself in the contemporary militant strike struggle on the other.

He then proceeds to enumerate the three main political topics which he proposes to enlarge upon in course of the letter. The major part of the letter is devoted to the discussion of the existence of two parties, ie CPI and WPP, at

40. *Op cit*, p 154.

that time, and their relations with each other. This was natural because at the time of writing Roy had before him not only the *Annual Report of the Communist Party of India* published in June 1927 and general information of the beginning of mass activities among the working class by the workers and peasants parties of Bengal and Bombay, but also the discussion that was going on about the organisational relation between CPI and WPP and their future development.

In the latter part of 1927 it was becoming clear that for the development of mass activities and to maintain its continuity it was necessary to function through an open organisation like the workers and peasants party. This was clear from the earlier experience of Bengal and of Bombay and Madras. While the first communist conference took place in Kanpur in 1925 the plan to hold a second conference was abandoned and instead a businesslike meeting of the extended central committee took place in Bombay at the end of May 1927. In the annual report of the same published in June 1927 the development and extension of mass activities in Bengal, Bombay and Madras have been mentioned. However, there was no clarity at the time as to the different political and organisational roles of these two parties. This we see in the discussion that was going and it is recorded in the contemporary documents. For instance Clemens Dutt in a letter dated 25 July 1927 is recording the impression that the CPI and WPP are becoming identical. In reply to this Spratt in his letter dated 4 September confirms this impression of Clemens and adds that the idea of an organised communist party is absolutely not understood and mentions that other comrades of Bombay agree with him. However the communists at that time were gradually realising that the Communist Party which was a target of continuous repression would have to be organised and functioned as a secret organisation while the open activities to form the class organisations of the peasants and working class had to be carried through the workers and peasants parties. But, the Communist Party having already emerged in the public as a revolutionary party of the

working class it was necessary to fight for its legal existence as long as it was not actually banned. The meeting of the CEC of the CPI held at the end of May 1927 was perhaps the last meeting openly held and reported in the press. This was not the case with similar meetings subsequently held in December 1927 and December 1928 etc. before the arrests in the Meerut conspiracy case. Roy, in this letter, attributes to Muzaffar Ahmad, the statement that: "the accused in the Kanpur case were sentenced not as communists...but for making preparations to 'wage war against the king'", and from this draws the conclusion that M. Ahmad harboured the illusion that the CP can function legally. This is not correct. We have not before us the actual letter he wrote to Roy at that time but Muzaffar Ahmad knew full well that the accused in the Kanpur case were charged of organising a section or branch of CI in India which is nothing but a communist party with the afore-said revolutionary objective. This is implied in the petition of complaint.<sup>41</sup> He along with other communists had no illusions about organising the Communist Party legally.

This background was necessary to properly understand the setting in which Roy is precisely formulating the relations between the Communist Party and the workers and peasants parties.

In the first place Roy, in this letter, refers to the breakthrough which the Communist Party, in its early years after 1925, was making through leading the struggles of workers and peasants and building their militant class organisations. At the same time he stresses that the communist vanguard which unfolds these mass activities and creates a broad mass base must itself be organised as a revolutionary party of the working class. This, he pointed out, has to be an organisation of revolutionaries which can develop and grow as an underground mass party combining legal and illegal activities and leading the mass base to higher and higher militant actions.

41. See *Documents*, Vol 2, p 281.

It will not be far wrong if we state that the communists in India had arrived at the same conclusion already in the latter part of 1927 even before the "Roy Letter" was written.

How far the Indian communists in those early years succeeded in building such a communist vanguard—illegally functioning Communist Party with wide mass contact—is a different question. But the main achievement of the years 1927 and 1928 was the coming into existence of the workers and peasants parties more or less in the manner in which Roy defines their activities and program in the letter.

Further, Roy attempts to give a concrete explanation of a criticism made at the time that the Communist Party of India and the Workers and Peasants Party were appearing to be much the same, by stressing the much broader character of the latter.

Having explained the difference between the WPP and CPI in relation to their class composition he goes on to further concretise their difference in respect of their political and economic programs. Stressing the point that the members of the CPI participate in the broader organisation of the WPP he points out that the program of the latter is not a communist program which is one of overthrowing capitalism and going forward to socialism. Describing in detail the program of the Workers and Peasants Party he points out that it is one of carrying through the democratic revolution, ie of achieving national independence and winning for the workers and peasants their democratic rights and liberties through nationalisation of public utilities, through the abolition of landlordism and of the feudal princely states, ensuring land to the tiller and the reduction of the burden of rent and debt. In this program he goes into considerable details about the demands of the peasants against the government, the landlords and the usurers as well as into the demands of the workers against the capitalists, Indian and foreign. In this program of workers and peasants he includes their democratic rights and the right to organise, to strike and to form workers' and peasants' committees in the fight to get the program implemented.

The open publication of the annual report of the CEC of CPI held in May 1927, he points out, was a mistake as it made public all the 15 names of the office-bearers. This, he said, should now be corrected by holding a new conference of the party secretly and electing a new CEC. Further, while noting that practically all the members of the CC of the CPI are organisers and leaders of the WPP, he points out that it should be so but it should not have been publicised. He is probably referring to the fact that the names of Muzaffar Ahmad, Abdul Halim and Soumyendranath Tagore which appeared as members of the CEC in the annual report of the CPI also figured as members of the executive of the WPP Bengal in its annual report of 1927-1928.

Dealing with the concrete problems of organising the WPP he warns against two mistakes: While avoiding the mistake of making the WPP too narrow so as to be almost identical with the CPI, he says we must also avoid the other mistake of making the WPP so broad as to include such members of the petty-bourgeoisie who are themselves landlords or linked with them. In this connection he refers to Naresh Sen Gupta and Atul Sen (? probably Atul Gupta) who, he says, are office-bearers of the WPP, but ought not to have been there as such. He suggests that they are landlords and doubts whether they accept the WPP program. We find these names mentioned in the annual report of the WPP Bengal for 1927-1928 where the former has been mentioned as the president and the latter, that is Atul Gupta, as the vice-president. (It is interesting to note that the same names, ie Naresh Sen Gupta and Atul Gupta which appeared in the "Roy Letter", also appear in a letter dated 10 May 1928 by Muzaffar Ahmad in which he is answering a letter of Clemens Dutt dated 26 January 1928. This means that Clemens Dutt in his letter (which is not on record) seems to have made the same criticism about these persons as in the "Roy Letter". It is interesting to note that Muzaffar Ahmad in his reply to Clemens Dutt states that both of them are not landlords but are supporters of the peasants in their struggles against landlord operations. He also said that he had no knowledge of the suggestion of Sasmal



being admitted in the party and says that he is a landlord himself. Sasmal's name appears in the "Roy Letter" where he is characterised as a left nationalist leader. But, we know that in another letter to Spratt dated 9 August 1927,<sup>42</sup> Clemens had suggested that the WPP should be a broad organisation which would include left congressmen like Sambamurthy and B. F. Bharucha. Reference to Sasmal in Muzaffar Ahmad's letter probably arises because he was mentioned in that context in an earlier letter either by Roy or Clemens. The "Roy Letter" mentioning Sasmal was not known to him at that time.

We have referred to this point to show that the question of the relation of the CPI and WPP and the urgent need to organise the latter as stated above was being discussed in the correspondence in the latter part of 1927 and "Roy Letter" is summing up the discussions with further concrete proposals. For instance, Roy proposes that the WPP should have not only individual membership but mass organisations like trade unions, peasants', students' and youth organisations should also be affiliated to it. Secondly, he suggests that it was high time to make the WPP a nationwide organisation by organising WPPs in other provinces and preparing for an all-India conference of these parties in the course of the year. Thirdly, for this conference, he suggests, the preparation of the following draft documents, e.g. present political situation, program of the party, tasks on the trade-union and peasant front, constitution and principles of the organisation of the party. Further, the conference should elect a CC or a national executive which would contain popular TU and peasant leaders and members known for their sacrifices in the national revolutionary movement. Fifthly, he suggests the All-India Workers and Peasants Party thus formed to take the decision to affiliate itself to World League against Imperialism and National Oppression etc. formed in February 1927 at the conference in Brussels and elect delegates to the next world congress of the same.

The idea of developing the WPP as a mass political party of the workers and peasants building their militant class organisation and acting in the national-liberation movement as a left wing strengthening the revolutionary trend in it was already being implemented in India even before this letter was written or reached India. We have already recorded that WPP members from Bombay and Bengal acted effectively as a left wing in the Madras session of the National Congress in December 1927. We have already shown how the WPP of Bombay brought into action a broad spectrum of trade unions in the boycott-Simon-commission movement. The idea that the WPP could have individual membership as well as collective affiliation of trade unions and peasants' organisations was already being implemented, as we see, in the constitution of WPP of Bengal adopted at its Bhatpara conference in March 1928. The preparations for making the WPP an all-India party were already afoot. This was mentioned in the Bhatpara conference mentioned above. Even before that conference met the leading members of the WPPs of Bengal and Bombay had met together to draft common resolutions for their respective conferences. The subjects of these were the same as suggested in the "Roy Letter". All these we shall see in detail in the next section.

Describing the role of the party press as the organiser of the open political party of the working class like the Workers and Peasants Party Roy refers to *Ganavani* which was at that time coming out in Bengali as the organ of Peasants and Workers Party (later named Workers and Peasants Party) of Bengal. As stated in the annual report of the CPI, *Kranti* Marathi weekly was coming out from Bombay as the organ of the WPP of Bombay since May 1927. As stated earlier *Ganavani* which started as a successor of *Langal* from April 1927 continued up to October of the same year, *Mehnatkash* (Worker) Urdu weekly edited by Abdul Majid was coming out in the same year. The critical comments made by Roy about the contents of *Ganavani* are not quite relevant. *Ganavani* was not just a trade-union paper but a political organ of the Workers and Peasants Party. This

is made clear in the appeal for funds made by Muzaffar Ahmad, its editor, in October 1927 after the publication of its 31st issue. Here *Ganavani* is described as a semi-theoretical agitational organ enabling political workers, who are conducting the economic struggles of the workers and peasants, to organise the advanced amongst them in the political party of the working class (WPP). It contained articles explaining the programs of workers and peasants, articles on peasant struggle and the urgent demands of the peasants, role which the organised workers and peasants were playing in the national freedom movement, e.g. boycott-Simon-commission campaign and so on. The paper had to cease publication at the end of October 1927 temporarily and began to reappear from June 1928 and continued right up to March 1929 when the editor and other leaders of the WPP were arrested in connection with the Meerut conspiracy case on 20 March 1929. The history of *Kranti* ran a similar course. Starting from 14 May 1927 it continued appearing regularly up to November 1927. It was restarted in June 1928 when the great general textile strike of Bombay had already begun. This new series of *Kranti*, edited by S. A. Dange, played a very important role in the general strike rallying the workers under the leadership of their "joint general strike committee"—in their militant struggle and conducting political agitation among them as well. The issues of *Mehnatkash* have not been traced and the history of this paper cannot be recorded. The idea of starting an all-India organ of the party was also being discussed in the later part of 1927,<sup>43</sup> but could not be implemented even up to the arrest of the leaders in the Meerut case. The *Spark* which was started as a weekly edited by M. G. Desai in January 1929 from Bombay and which the prosecution suspected to be the central organ was actually not so. It was an individual venture by Desai himself though it carried articles on political and workingclass questions in the national freedom movement by communists and Workers and Peasants Party leaders.

43. Meerut Record, P 1010 & P 1011—letters of S. S. Mirajkar and S. V. Ghate.

Coming to the question of international affiliation, ie of WPP to the League against Imperialism and of the CPI to the Comintern, Roy makes certain assertions which need to be examined. Firstly, he says that there is a confusion on this question among the Indian communists. Secondly, he suggests that the international contact of the CPI should function not through London but through the apparatus of the "foreign bureau" in Paris and Berlin. Thirdly, he criticises Saklatvala and George Allison for allegedly suggesting the WPP being affiliated to the Minority Movement in England. Lastly, he explains the international significance of CPI being affiliated to Communist International.

At the time of writing the letter we may assume that Roy had before him detailed reports made by Saklatvala and George Allison of their experiences and work in India sent by them through CPGB or Clemens Dutt to the Comintern. We assume this because he was a full member of ECCI and as such all papers and reports sent to the CI were available to him. We have not seen those reports but from our information about their work and discussions with Indian comrades during their stay in India we can firmly assert that neither of them could be accused of creating such confusion about affiliation.

The annual report of the CPI giving the report, constitution and the resolutions passed by the enlarged meeting of the CEC of the CPI defines the position of the party on the question of affiliation of the Comintern at that time clearly enough. Though it does not say that the CPI is a "section of the Comintern" for obvious reasons, it does state in article 2 of the party constitution: "Membership—only those subscribing to the program laid down by the Communist International will be eligible for its membership." In fact as "Roy Letter" states: "Up till now the CI has acted upon the affiliation of the emigrant section of the CP of India." Muzaffar Ahmad quoted these lines from the "Roy Letter" to prove that the emigre unit of the Communist Party of India was affiliated to the CI and that "it is clear that the affiliation was then intact" (ie at the time of writing the letter). This fact is confirmed by the official

record of the fifth congress of the Communist International held from 17 June to 8 July 1924. In Pyatnitsky's report on the organisational question we find a statistical table prepared by the mandate commission showing the figures of the membership and candidate membership of the affiliated parties at the fourth and the fifth congresses. India figured as no. 41 in the list of 46 parties, its membership is not recorded as the party was "illegal". It is also recorded in the same report that India was allowed "two delegates, with decisive votes" and "10 mandates". The delegates were M. N. Roy and Mohammed Ali Sepassi.<sup>43a</sup>

"Roy Letter" had further suggested that at the next conference of the CPI a decision should be taken on the affiliation to CI and this resolution should be communicated to the latter. It is on record that at the meeting of the central committee held at the end of 1928 in Calcutta such a decision was actually taken.<sup>44</sup> At the same time the meeting decided to make the Communist Party active and start propaganda in the name of the CPI. "Our legal position should be upheld. Organising and propagating as a Communist Party."<sup>45</sup> This meant fight for the legal existence of the party and at the same time preparing to function it underground in the face of repression. Implementing this decision, a new draft constitution of the party was prepared in the early months of 1929. This draft constitution which is on record defines the party in its first and second articles as follows:<sup>46</sup>

"Article 1. Name: The name of the party shall be the Communist Party of India (section of the Communist International).

"Article 2. Object: The object of the party is the attainment of socialism through the overthrow of imperialist capitalist rule, the seizure of power by the working class, and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat

43a. *Documents*, Vol 2, p 349; cf also CPGB publication (on behalf of CI) of an abridged *Report of the Fifth Congress of the CI*.

44. Meerut Record, P 1295—Minutes of the meeting.

45. *Ibid*, P 1300.

46. *Ibid*, P 416(7).

in accordance with the program of the Communist International and the policy from time to time by the party with the agreement of the Communist International.”

Rest of the clauses of this draft constitution run parallel to the constitution adopted in May 1927 and printed in the annual report<sup>47</sup> with certain improvements and precision. For instance, there is no presidium in this draft constitution and the central executive committee is the highest body between two annual conferences. It is significant that the clause about the foreign bureau in the draft constitution is almost identical to the same clause in the constitution of 1927.

In connection with the proposal in the “Roy Letter” that the WPP should be affiliated to the League against Imperialism, facts are as follows: At the foundation conference of League against Imperialism in Brussels in February 1927 the decision was taken to affiliate as many anti-imperialist national organisations as well as trade unions in all countries as possible. Thus in May 1927 the All India Congress Committee, on the initiative of Jawaharlal Nehru and the WPP member in the same, took a decision to make the Indian National Congress an associate member of the League against Imperialism.<sup>48</sup> In the same year a little later the pamphlet *India and China* published in May 1927 on behalf of WPP by S. S. Mirajkar and P. Spratt contained a brief report and the decisions of the abovementioned Brussels congress of the League against Imperialism.<sup>49</sup>

At the Kanpur session of the AITUC in November 1927 the WPP members moved a resolution to get the TUC affiliated to the League against Imperialism. This was not passed. This fact is mentioned in a letter by V. Chattopadhyaya to S. A. Dange dated 18 September 1928. The same letter mentions the idea of WPP publishing an illustrated paper for the workers with the help of the League.

But the wholehearted support of the WPP to the League against Imperialism could be expressed in terms of affilia-

47. *Documents*, Vol 3B, pp 207-11.

48. Cf *ibid*, p 28.

49. *Ibid*, p 9.

tion only after the WPP had become an all-India organisation. Thus when the workers and peasants parties formed in different provinces met together in an All-India Workers and Peasants Conference in Calcutta in December 1928 they adopted a resolution: "Appendix I—affiliation to the League against Imperialism—resolved that the general secretary of the Workers and Peasants Party of India apply for affiliation to the League against Imperialism and for National Independence." Actually a telegram was sent by LAI to AIWPP conference. It reads: "In name executive committee League against Imperialism we send heartiest fraternal greetings your first all-India conference. Hope your deliberations will result establishing strong organisation India's working masses struggle against imperialism and attainment national social liberty. Call upon you protest expulsion Johnstone American trade unionist sent attend your conference as our fraternal delegate. Long live Indian Workers and Peasants! Long live Independent India. Signed International Secretariat, Munzenberg, Chatopadhyaya."

This telegram never reached the conference as it was intercepted by the police and later produced in Meerut conspiracy case as a prosecution document.<sup>50</sup>

"Roy Letter" then goes on to refer to "a representative of the WPP who has come to Moscow whom Muzaffar Ahmad (Edward) knows and who is now in the Lenin School". This refers to Soumyendranath Tagore, who left India at the end of April 1927 and reached Moscow via Paris and Berlin in June 1927. In this paragraph of the letter Roy gives a sharply critical appraisal of Soumyen Tagore's claim as a representative of the WPP and of the Communist Party of India and the reports he made to the International on his arrival before Roy's return to Moscow from China. We will examine this appraisal in terms of what Muzaffar Ahmad has written in his book *The Communist Party and its Formation Abroad* in criticism of the illegal pamphlet of Soumyen Tagore's *Historical De-*

50. Meerut Record, P 1762.

*velopment of Communist Movement in India* published in December 1944.

Soumyendranath Tagore, a grandson of Rabindranath Tagore, came in touch with WPP by reading a copy of *Langal* the then organ of the Peasants and Workers Party of Bengal which was sold in the streets of Calcutta in those days. He says that he joined the Peasants and Workers Party of Bengal and was elected a sectional secretary along with Hemanta Sarkar in the first conference (Krishnagar) of the party in 1926.<sup>51</sup> According to official report of the Peasants and Workers Party of Bengal this statement of Soumyen is not correct. Actually, Hemanta Kumar Sarkar and Qutbuddin Ahmad were elected as "secretaries respectively of the peasants and workers subcommittees".<sup>52</sup> But it is a fact that at the second conference held in Calcutta on 19 and 20 February 1927 he was elected as the general secretary of the party.<sup>53</sup>

The circumstances in which Soumyen Tagore went abroad have been described by Muzaffar Ahmad in his book<sup>54</sup> and basically confirmed by Soumyen Tagore in his book.<sup>55</sup> Soumyen Tagore's contact with the revolutionary groups and with the WPP had attracted the attention of the police and his arrest was imminent. Charles Tegart, the Calcutta police chief, told this to a member of the Tagore family and suggested that it could be avoided if Soumyen was sent abroad and that in that case a passport would be issued to him forthwith. Soumyen reported this to Muzaffar Ahmad and Nalini Gupta and it was agreed that he should go abroad instead of spending time in jail. Thus it is quite evident that it was not the WPP sending him as its representative abroad but Soumyen was seeking a credential from WPP to facilitate his stay and study abroad with the help of the international workingclass

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51. S. N. Tagore, *Historical Development of Communist Movement in India*, p 7.

52. *Call to Action*, p 46.

53. *Ibid*, p 54.

54. *The CPI and its Formation Abroad*, p 160.

55. *Yatri*, pp 111-12.



organisations. At the time of leaving India Soumyen carried a credential from the PWP Bengal of which Atul Chandra Gupta was the chairman and himself the general secretary. After reaching Europe Soumyen found that his credential was not sufficient and he wrote to Muzaffar asking for similar credentials from the WPPs of Bombay and Madras. This letter was intercepted by the police and was produced in Meerut conspiracy case.<sup>56</sup> Muzaffar Ahmad, who received this letter, later said that he had helped Soumyen to the best of his limited powers and so did Abdul Halim throughout this period. Muzaffar Ahmad further said: "Anyway I assisted him to receive recognition as a delegate. To comrade Abdul Halim he sent by hand a long letter of 28 pages, acknowledging that if Muzaffar Ahmad's letter had not reached at last, he would have had no standing in the international field."<sup>57</sup> We may further add that the annual report of the CPI published in June 1927 which gives the list of the members of the central executive committee mentions Soumyen Tagore as a member and this fact must have helped him in this direction. Soumyen himself records that a copy of this report was in the hands of the ECCI officials.<sup>58</sup>

Soumyen Tagore left for Moscow towards the end of April 1927 and reached it via Paris and Berlin in June 1927. Reaching Moscow, he met Luhani who put him in touch with the officials of the executive of the CI. He was asked to make two reports: (1) Condition of the CPI and (2) Political situation in India. Luhani told him that real discussion on these reports would take place only after Roy's return from China. Roy's reaction, possibly after reading his reports, are summed up in the seven points which he has mentioned in this paragraph of his letter. Soumyen's pamphlet *Historical Development*, etc. gives us an idea of the nature of the report he must have submitted to the CI. Muzaffar Ahmad, commenting on the pamphlet, is highly critical of these reports and points out their inadequacies

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56. Meerut Record, P 2130.

57. *The CPI and its Formation Abroad*, pp 163-69.

58. *Yatri*, p 136.

and their unauthorised character. Muzaffar Ahmad states: "He knew something about Bengal but he was completely ignorant about the rest of India. Besides he had not even discussed things with us in order that he might present a good report while he was abroad. And yet he concocted some sort of a report and placed it before the Communist International... Not content with Soumyendranath report the representative of the Communist International began a lengthy and exhaustive discussion with him regarding the movement in India and the problems of party building. Then they asked him to return to India and report back to the party the discussions that had taken place."<sup>59</sup>

But Soumyen declined to go back as he wanted to stay back for about six months for further study. So his request was accepted and he was admitted to the Lenin School.<sup>60</sup>

In the concluding part of the letter Roy makes three organisational suggestions which he thought were necessary at that time for the further development of the party. These were: firstly, leading party comrades who were active in the trade-union movement together with left nationalist leaders working with the party should be sent for a conference with the foreign bureau members somewhere in West Europe; secondly, the CPI should send a resolution to the CI about the foreign bureau but what he meant was the role of the foreign bureau according to his understanding which was different from its role as defined in the constitution of the CPI adopted in May 1927; thirdly, the *Masses* run by him from abroad to be accepted as the central organ of the party.

None of these suggestions, however, were accepted for implementation by the party in India. No delegation was or could be sent for such a conference. His conception of a foreign bureau and its role and functioning was not accepted as can be seen from the section on foreign bureau in the constitution of 1927 which defined it as acting according to the decisions of the CEC of the CPI, while according to

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59. *The CPI and its Formation Abroad*, pp 165-66.

60. *Ibid*, p 166; *Yatri*, p 165.

Roy's definition the foreign bureau is defined as "agency of the CI" organisationally superior to the CPI. Thirdly, the *Masses* which functioned up to 1928 as a monthly ceased publication in April 1928. Though *Masses* played a useful role in those early years, it had a very limited circulation and could not act as the organ of the party when it had made a breakthrough to mass activities in 1928. Muzaffar Ahmad's suggestion referred to by Roy that the central organ of the party should be printed and published inside India directly under the leadership of the CPI was correct and the party in India in those days (1928) was discussing the possibility of its implementation. Actually, further development of the party took place not on the basis of Roy's suggestion but through the development of the militant struggle of the working class and the growth of the workers and peasants parties leading the struggle of the toiling masses throughout India and placing a revolutionary program before the national movement. The blow the imperialists struck against this rising movement by concocting the Meerut conspiracy case in 1929 against the communists actually became the basis for emergence and the political organisational growth of the Communist Party as a mass force. In this context it is interesting to record here the comment of Soumyendranath Tagore in his pamphlet.<sup>61</sup> He wrote:

"Nothing made so much propaganda in India for communism as did the Meerut conspiracy case. The entire attention of political India was focused on the Meerut conspiracy case and hundreds of radical youths were drawn to the Communist Party because of it. There was also good bit of propaganda in the international press.

"One can say with justice that the Meerut conspiracy case placed communism on a sure footing in India."

61. *Historical Development etc.*, p 20.

## V

## WORKERS AND PEASANTS PARTIES SPREAD

We have already described how the Workers and Peasants Party arose first in Bengal and a year later in Bombay and their early political and mass activities. Communists as well as leftwing elements in the Indian National Congress who were turning to building class organisations of workers and peasants took the initiative to form this party. This we see in the fact that in Bengal, it was the Labour Swaraj Party which became the Peasants and Workers Party and later the Workers and Peasants Party in early 1928. In Bombay it was the Congress Labour Party which developed as the Workers and Peasants Party. As we have seen, the WPP members took the initiative to put forward the program of complete independence together with socio-economic democratic demands of the people before the AICC (May 1927). In the same year, this party, both in Bengal and Bombay, was developing activities and building a militant wing of the trade-union movement, which first brought in the red flag. Thus at the end of 1927 a sizable leftwing of militant trade-unionists was functioning in the Kanpur session of the Trade Union Congress (November) as well as at the Madras session of the Indian National Congress (December) which was led by the WPP members.

Already in 1927 the political and mass activities of the WPPs in Bengal and Bombay were sufficiently impressive and effective. The success of the political work and mass activities of these parties had created the preconditions for going forward to launch the Workers and Peasants Party of India. Thus when the WPP of Bengal prepared a manifesto to the Madras session of Indian National Congress, Muzaffar Ahmad while sending a draft of the same to Majid for consultation asked him whether it should be in the name of the all-India party.

When the meeting of WPP members present at the Madras session of the INC was held on 28 December 1927,

they not only decided to organise an all-India conference for the formation of the Workers and Peasants Party of India but also prepared a plan of drafting political and organisational documents for the purpose. There is on record of the Meerut case an exhibit which appears to be the notes of the decisions of this meeting.<sup>62</sup> It states that a conference should be convened in February-March 1928 in Calcutta to which invitations should be sent "to WPP of Bombay and Bengal, WPP of Punjab (if in existence), managers of *Kirti*, *Mehnatkash*, etc., trade unions in Bengal, possibly individuals of the Republican Party in Madras, to send delegates with votes, the others to send nonvoting delegates". About the documents to be prepared for the conference it stated as follows: (1) "To formulate a thesis on the existing situation, international and internal, economic and political and hence to devise a comprehensive program of work and sketch of future lines of development, relation to other parties and social groups and organisations" to be drafted by C. G. Shah and S. A. Dange. (2) "To formulate resolutions on organisations of AI party and provincial parties, methods of work, publications, finance, etc." to be drafted by Shaukat Usmani and K. N. Joglekar. It also mentions drafting of resolutions on questions of youth and relation to student organisations as well as on questions of trade-union movement. Further it was decided to prepare a plan for the boycott campaign against the Simon commission as an immediate task.

This rough outline of the program for preparation of the all-India conference was taken up a month later when the enlarged meeting of the CC of the WPP Bombay met on 29 January 1928, where the leaders of WPP of Bengal were also present. Organisation of the demonstration against the Simon commission, which was to take place five days later, ie on 3 February 1928, on its arrival, was the most urgent question before the meeting. For this purpose 36 persons representing various trade unions and other leftist elements were invited to ensure the widest mobilisation and a reso-

62. Meerut Record, P 1373 (2).

lution on the subject was also adopted. We have dealt with this in an earlier section and also reproduced the text of the resolution.

The main task before the meeting was to discuss and finalise the documents to be placed before the all-India conference. M. Ahmad and P. Spratt were present on behalf of the WPP of Bengal. These documents were concretisation of the rough program chalked out at the Madras meeting. Thus there was to be a document reviewing the international and national situation and outline the current task of the party. This came before the meeting in the form of a draft "General Political Situation", which was often referred to by Ghate as a thesis. The next document was on the organisation of the party. There were three more documents: on trade unions, peasants and youth. The sixth document was on the Simon commission. The proposed all-India conference, for which the five documents mentioned above were prepared, was postponed to April and later on to December 1928 when it actually took place in Calcutta. But these draft documents were first put before the first annual conference of WPP of Bombay on 18 March 1928 and adopted after discussion and amendments. About two weeks later these documents in a further improved form were adopted at the third conference of the WPP of Bengal held at Bhatpara from 31 March to 1 April 1928. The documents reproduced here are from the text of *A Call to Action*, an openly printed report and proceedings of the Bhatpara conference.

Before we review these five documents we will briefly describe the work done by the annual conferences at Bombay and of Bengal which met in the latter half of March.

The first annual conference of the WPP of Bombay met on the 18 March 1928. The source material for the proceedings of this conference are: (1) minutes recorded in the minute book of the Bombay party,<sup>63</sup> (2) the report sent to the press at the time by Ghate<sup>64</sup> and a confidential report

63. Ibid, P 1344.

64. Ibid, P 1348 (24).

made by the police at the time and now available in the Maharashtra State Archives.<sup>65</sup>

We are not reproducing these here but summarising some of the basic facts emerging from these materials. The conference was presided over by D. R. Thengdi and prominent amongst those present were: S. V. Ghate, S. S. Mirajkar, K. N. Joglekar, S. A. Dange, Lalji Pendse, P. Spratt, B. Bradley, T. V. Parvate and R. S. Nimbkar. The conference received messages of fraternal solidarity from the AITUC, the CPGP and from the Peasant International (Krestintern) in Moscow which were read out by S. A. Dange. The secretary's report presented by S. V. Ghate summarised the work done by the party in 1927. The main documents were then put before the conference: General Political Situation—by S. A. Dange, Trade Union—by K. N. Joglekar, Organisation—by S. S. Mirajkar, Youth—by S. V. Ghate, Peasants—by R. S. Nimbkar. Apart from these five documents which were adopted by the conference after discussion and amendments, the conference also adopted another document entitled "Thesis on our Attitude towards the Congress and Present Labour Leadership". We are not reproducing this here because its tactical line is already implicit in the other documents. The main purpose of this last document was to make clear to the party members that the party, while working in the Indian National Congress and in the AITUC, takes an independent stand, that of the working class and of the toiling masses, which is one of opposing the compromising attitude of the rightwing leadership of both the organisations. Refuting the charge that the WPP was taking an anticongress stand it points out that its criticism of the congress leadership is from the leftist angle and is always striving to unite the leftists such as independents and republicans to make the movement more consistently anti-imperialist and revolutionary. It sums up the position of the WPP thus: "It is plain from what had been said up till now that the fight for swaraj cannot be divested of the class conflict, if it is to be really fought by the people, who are

65. Home Department Special Branch Report, File No 543(13).

the most capable of it and have in the whole history of India done it... Therefore, the WPP cannot divest its nationalist activities of their workingclass character. The two are inseparable." Further, it is interesting to note that in another place it states that the position of the WPP in this matter has been almost correctly interpreted in *Modern India* by R. Palme Dutt published in Bombay.

It reiterates that the WPP members working in the trade unions are always ready to cooperate with the leadership in order to organise the workers and help them to unite in fighting for their just and urgent demands on the basis of one union in one industry. It further says that the WPP members are often accused of advocating general strikes and no compromise, violence and so on at every time and place.

Then it goes on to state the attitude of the WPP towards workingclass struggles and its trade-union movement and critically analyses the stand of the old leadership which relies more on the goodwill and generosity of the owning class than in building the militant unity and the organisation of the working class. Without doubting the honesty of the old leadership or minimising their role in the trade-union movement, it stresses that they ignore the fundamental conflict between capitalists and workers and are more interested in gaining minor demands by collaborating with the owners than in organising workers with a militant spirit of changing the system as a whole. While the WPP, on the other hand, continuously and persistently leads the workers in their day-to-day struggle, it always places before the workers the goal of changing the very system which starves them. In this connection it is important to note the cryptic reference to the presidential address in the Kanpur session of the AITUC to the demand that "society must own the things that produce its bread and living". Actually this was a fervent appeal made by the president which in the text of the address reads as follows:

"I call upon you, comrades, to raise the banner of your ideals demanding nationalisation of land and industry, a



civilised existence, a government of the workers, and economic system for the benefit of humanity..."<sup>66</sup>

Refuting the charge that the WPP brings politics into the trade-union movement, it points out that the old leadership is also demanding that the workers should have the right to vote and that labour should be properly represented in the legislature—a correct demand in those days when there was no adult suffrage. But the politics they wanted the workers to follow was the politics of the employer. The urgent need of the hour, the document stresses, is to organise the workers and peasants for winning: "More wages, shorter hours for the workers, more land and less taxation for the peasants." So long as the old leadership wants these demands to be realised by the solid organisation of the workers and their struggle and not merely through parliamentary work there is no reason why they should reject the cooperation of the WPP or misunderstand it.

The general line to decide whether it should be a sectional or general strike or a compromise depends on the concrete situation of the time and on choosing the best way to further the cause of the victory of the working class at the time in winning their demands. The main thing is: "...Sharpening the mind of the workers, make him class conscious, a still harder fighter and unbeliever in the goodness of a system that wants to starve him."

The Bombay conference concluded after electing an executive committee composed of: *president*: D. R. Thengdi, *secretary & treasurer*: S. V. Ghate, *executive members*: S. H. Jhabwala, J. B. Patel, R. S. Nimbkar, S. A. Dange.

As the conference was being held in preparation for bringing into existence the all-India party, its resolution on organisation emphasised the need to put the party "on a national basis" and to elect a national executive at the all-India congress of the party. In pursuance of this it directed

66. *Trade Union Bulletin*, Vol 4, Nos 6, 7, 8, December 1927-January-February 1928, **emphasis added**.

its executive to elect delegates for the forthcoming all-India conference.

We have stated above that the main documents and thesis adopted at the Bombay conference were those drafted by the enlarged executive of the WPP Bombay in its meeting on 29 January 1928. It is recorded in the minutes that the conference passed a resolution stating: "This meeting adopts the thesis prepared by the enlarged executive etc..." Very probably the executive committee drafts were adopted with minor changes. However, we have not before us these drafts either in their original or in amended form. But it is on record that the five drafts were sent to Calcutta to Muzaffar Ahmad in the second week of February. It is also on record that these did not reach him as they were intercepted by the police. This is clear from the correspondence between Ghate and Muzaffar Ahmad in February 1928. Muzaffar in his letter complained of the nonreceipt of the drafts and Ghate in reply stated that they might have been intercepted by the police and promised to get fresh copies typed and sent to him.<sup>67</sup> These drafts finally reached Calcutta and became the basis for preparing the improved version for placing before the (third) Bhatpara conference of the Peasants and Workers Party. We are reproducing here the documents in their finalised form as adopted at that conference.

The authentic source material giving the proceedings as well as the documents and resolutions adopted by the conference as well as its organisational decisions is a pamphlet entitled *A Call to Action* published by Muzaffar Ahmad for the Workers and Peasants Party of Bengal, which later figured as a prosecution exhibit in the Meerut conspiracy case.<sup>68</sup> The introduction of this pamphlet describes the opening of the conference in these words:

"The conference took place on Saturday 31 March and 1 April at Bhatpara, in a pandal erected near their central

67. Meerut Record, P 1848 C—Muzaffar's letter to Ghate dated 21 February 1928; P 2055 C—Ghate's reply dated 27 February.

68. Ibid, P 523.

office by comrades of the Bengal Jute Workers' Association. The president, Atulchandra Gupta, MABL, was in the chair, and in all about 80 members attended, including representatives from Dacca and from Mymensingh branch, and from the Bengal Jute Workers' Association, which is affiliated to the party. 100 to 150 visitors also attended. Messages were received from a member of the Workers and Peasants Party of Bombay, the president and secretary of the Bengal Trade Union Federation, and Mr Atul Chandra Sen of Dacca, regretting their inability to be present.

"On the first day the proceedings began at 3 p.m. when Comrade A. Roy on behalf of the executive committee read the report, copies of which in Bengali and English were circulated."

This report entitled "Report of the Executive Committee—1927-1928"<sup>69</sup> has been reproduced in full in *A Call to Action*. It gives the history of the emergence of the party towards the end of 1926 and its work and development up to the early months of 1928.

We are not reproducing the text of this report here but quoting from it some relevant facts about the mass work of the party in Bengal.

*Labour Work:* (a) "The party conducted propaganda among the jute workers in conjunction with the Bengal Jute Workers' Association. The president, vice-president and general secretary of the association are party members, and it was affiliated to the party in October 1927. Reorganising and extension of the work of the association are now being carried on. (b) Party members are engaged in re-establishing the Dhakeswari Cotton Mill Workers' Union at Dacca. (c) Party members are reorganising according to trade-union principles the Bengal Glass Workers' Union. (d) In January 1928 under the auspices of the party was formed the Scavengers' Union of Bengal in Calcutta, with branches already formed at Howrah and Dacca and one in the process of formation at Mymensingh. A success-

69. This seems to have been also printed separately for distribution to delegates—cf. *ibid*, P 139 (Bengali) and P 53 (English).

ful strike was fought by the Calcutta scavengers in March. (e) Party members have established the Workers' Protection League which has contested in court many cases under the Indian workmen's compensation act. (f) In December 1927, party members rendered assistance in organisation and propaganda in the strike of dock workers at Calcutta."

*Work among Peasants:* "A new branch has been formed recently to cover Atia and Tangail", the workers there took up the demands and the hardship the peasants have to suffer because of the vast neighbouring forest area declared reserved and the entry of the peasants banned.

*Party Membership:* "During the year the individual membership increased, and is now 125, consisting of peasants and intellectuals in about equal proportion, with a few workers. A branch of the party is to be established shortly at Dacca. The affiliated membership, including branch membership, is over 10,000."

*Party in the All India Trade Union Congress:* "A few of our members were able to attend as delegates the Delhi and Kanpur sessions of the AITUC (March and November 1927) and in agreement with comrades from Bombay and the Punjab were able to press our point of view with some success. Two of our members are in the executive council of the Trade Union Congress."

*Party in the Indian National Congress:* "Three of our members were elected in 1927 to the Bengal provincial congress committee and two to the all-India congress committee." We have already recorded how the WPP members who came to the Madras session of the INC (1927) as delegates from Bengal, Madras, Bombay, Ajmer-Marwar and the Punjab acted together to organise a leftwing to support and put forward radical policies and program.<sup>70</sup> The manifesto of the WPP to the Madras session has already been published.<sup>71</sup>

*Press of the Party in Bengal:* The report gives the history from the starting of *Langal* on 16 December 1925 to its

70. *Documents*, Vol IIIB, p 118.

71. *Ibid*, pp 301-6.

discontinuation on 15 April 1926 and of *Ganavani* from 12 August to 12 October 1926 and then from 14 April to 27 October 1927.

Thereafter the five main documents were put before the conference and adopted after discussion and amendments. The constitution of the party with certain amendments was also adopted. The name of the party was changed to Workers and Peasants Party of Bengal. Then a proposal to form an all-India party was approved. The resolution adopted reads: "This conference endorses the action of the executive committee in attempting, in agreement with parties and groups in other parts of India, to establish the 'Workers and Peasants Party of India', and appoints comrades Muzaffar Ahmad, Dharanikanta Goswami, A. Roy and Abdul Halim to form a subcommittee to represent the party in making arrangements to form the united party and to hold an all-India conference in December next."

The conference adopted a resolution on the EI Railway workers' strike and condemned the firing on workers at Bamangachi. There was another resolution to organise the workers' defence corps.

It expressed indignation at the resolution adopted by the EC of AITUC at its meeting in Delhi on 15 March 1928 on breaking of relation with the Workers' Welfare League of India, London.

It welcomed the formation of the League against Imperialism and against National Oppression and it urges the formation of a centre in India for conducting the propaganda of the league and protested against the proscription of the publications of the league by the government.

After adopting the resolutions on the current situation the conference proceeded to elect the new executive consisting of thirteen persons in place of the seventeen elected at the last conference. Names of both the executives are recorded in *A Call to Action*.

Atulchandra Gupta and Nareshchandra Sen Gupta who had been elected president and vice-president respectively in the last conference were reelected to the same posts now named chairman and vice-chairman.

Both Atulchandra Gupta and Nareshchandra Sen Gupta were associated with workers and peasants movement since the Krishnagar conference in early 1926 when the Labour Swaraj Party became the Peasants and Workers Party, Muzaffar Ahmad refers to Nareshchandra Sen Gupta as "well-known advocate and reputed Bengali author" and to Atulchandra Gupta as "well-known advocate" with "progressive ideas in politics".<sup>72</sup> Muzaffar Ahmad was elected the general secretary in place of Soumyendranath Tagore, the former general secretary who had left for Germany in the previous year. Dharanikanta Goswami was reelected sectional secretary for labour. Prominent among nine members of the executive were Gopendra Krishna Chakravarty, Abdul Halim, Abdur Razzak Khan, Kalidas Bhattacharya and Aftab Ali. Thus the conference concluded with the election of the executive.

As we have seen, both the Bombay and Bengal conferences were in fact a preparation for the organisation of the party on an all-India basis. The Bombay conference adopted a resolution stressing that the time was ripe for the formation of the Workers and Peasants Party of India. The Bengal conference which was held about 15 days later went a step further and decided to have the all-India conference in December and appointed a committee for its preparation. The five main documents or theses, which the Bombay conference had adopted in their preliminary form and which were finalised in the Bengal conference and made public through the pamphlet *A Call to Action*, lay down the policy and the program, and the organisational principles of the proposed all-India party as well as its line of mass work in the trade-union, peasant and youth movements.

The introductory part of the thesis "General Political Situation" (Document 14) deals with the international situation, outlining the features of the deepening crisis of the capitalist system expressed in sharp competition between the capitalist countries themselves, rising unemployment

72. *Myself and the Communist Party of India*, p 418.

and the struggle of the working class for their basic demands and the rise of the freedom struggles of the colonial countries exploited by them. In this situation, the document points out, the rise of the Soviet Republic gave strength to the emancipatory struggle of the peoples of the dependent countries, brought forward successes of the socialist reconstruction and thus further contributed to the instability of capitalist system, which is seeking a solution of the crisis by whipping up a war hysteria against the Socialist Republic. The countervailing factor against this is the growing contradictions in the capitalist countries themselves and the rise of the labour movement in those countries. In the colonies with the source of cheap raw materials and its control over the vast market where it makes its huge profits, imperialism is tightening its political and economic grip. In those countries where the emancipatory movement is rising to new heights, it is seeking to suppress it by repression and to disrupt it by promoting the defection of the bourgeoisie from the same by granting them minor concessions. This was the case in China and the same has been attempted in India.

In the next part the document described in concrete details the abovementioned point and the present situation in India. Firstly it describes how the British imperialists exercise full political and economic control in the whole of India, ie, the so-called British Indian provinces as well as the remaining part ruled by its satellite princelings. The British imperialists, in alliance with the princes and landlords, imposed an autocratic rule on the Indian people depriving them of elementary civil liberties and democratic rights. It then goes on to describe the role of the different classes towards emancipatory movement that is rising up with ever greater force against this rule.

It is important to note that this document gives the characterisation of the role of the Indian bourgeoisie vis-a-vis imperialism as well as in the national movement. It describes the policy of the Indian bourgeoisie as a whole as one of compromise with imperialism. Thus, all parties of the Indian bourgeoisie represented in the All Parties Confer-

ence supported dominion status, the main demand put forward in the All Parties Committee's report. The only opposition, as we have seen, earlier came from the AITUC in which a left wing led by the WPP was already functioning and from the Independence of India League of Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose, who were at that time representing the left wing of the Indian National Congress. It describes the attitude of the Indian bourgeoisie as vacillating and compromising and not consistently supporting the demand for complete independence and even such elementary demands as adult suffrage by referring to the constitution drafted by an ex-president and ex-secretary of the Congress demanding "literate suffrage" and "present suffrage" respectively.

This analysis of the role, which the different classes are playing in the struggle against oppression and exploitation of the country by the British imperialism and the feudal forces, leads to a precise formulation of the objective and the form of the struggle which the national movement has to adopt.

The WPP gives its own conception for building a united national front for leading and developing this revolutionary national movement. It is significant to note that the document lays great stress on the development of the peasant movement with the slogans—land to the tiller, reduction of taxes, debt relief, etc.—in the forefront.

After putting forward its conception of a revolutionary national movement and united national front, the document enunciates in precise terms an anti-imperialist and anti-feudal program which was a revolutionary one as distinct from the moderate demands put forward at that time through the All Parties Conference by the Indian National Congress.

Outlining the task of the party the document gives prime importance to the building of the Workers and Peasants Party as an independent political force based on the class organisations of the workers and peasants and drawing towards it the militant forces of the national movement.

The document then goes on to outline in some details



the work in the youth, in the trade-union movement and among the masses of the peasantry.

In the case of the youth it takes note of the fact that at that time the youth was playing an important role in supporting the left and the revolutionary wing of the freedom movement by building its own organisations and holding conferences. This was particularly so in those provinces where the national movement was most advanced, viz Bengal, Bombay and the Punjab. It calls upon the party to contact the youth organisations to draw them towards the workers' and peasants' movement and to support its policies.

The tasks of the party in the trade-union movement are dealt with some detail, stress being laid on the better organisation of trade unions and trade councils, training militant workers by giving them political education and building a left wing in the AITUC.

Turning to the task of the party among the peasantry it frankly admits that the work has hardly begun, though the spontaneous actions of the peasantry in the postwar national movement are spreading all over the country and often rising to higher form. It takes note of the fact that the conditions of peasants differ from province to province due to difference in land revenue and landlord systems. It has formulated the salient demands of the peasants arising out of the exploitation of the peasants by the statutory landlords and by the big landholders and by the money-lenders as well as by the British government and the merchants. In the task of organising the peasantry it takes note of the close link which the workers have with the villages from where they come. It suggests that the workers and migratory labourers, and particularly the railway workers, could play a considerable part in drawing the peasantry in the rising movement of the toiling masses.

Reiterating the task of building the party it emphasises that the Workers and Peasants Party—the open political party of the working class—must be developed as a mass party with a trained cadre of party workers capable of playing an effective role in the national freedom movement

as well as building class organisations of workers and peasants.

The document also outlines the policy of the party in the field of international affairs. The Workers and Peasants Party, it stresses, must forge links with the League against Imperialism and the international working class, particularly the militant section, and come forward before the people popularising their role and the role of the first socialist state as a friend and an ally in our freedom struggle.

This document is the first general political thesis of the Workers and Peasants Party giving an overall picture of its policy and program and laying down its strategy and tactics vis-a-vis the national movement and in the field of international affairs. It gives, in considerable details, the task of organising the party and its work in the trade union, peasantry and youth, which is further concretised in four other resolutions, viz Youth, Trade Union, Peasants and Organisation, adopted by the Bhatpara conference.

The resolution on youth (Document 15) emphasises the role which the militant youth organisations were playing at the time in demanding and supporting a revolutionary policy in the national freedom movement and underlines the need for the WPP to build an independent youth organisation. The resolution puts forward detailed guidelines for work among the youth and directs this youth organisation to act as a centre to keep in touch with other youth organisations in order to win the youth towards a sound policy and draw them towards the workers' and peasants' movement. It is significant that the resolution warns the youth against fascism which it characterises as a movement of the reactionary middle class and anti-working class.

The resolution on the trade-union movement (Document 16) drafted in the first quarter of the year, ie, before the big militant strikes developed in Bombay, Calcutta and on the railways, gives a sharp criticism of the reformist leadership of the trade-union movement of the time and gives guidelines for developing militant trade unions in which the workers themselves come forward as leaders of their struggles and organisers of their unions. The resolution sig-

nificantly refers to the BNR strike and to the strike on two textile mills (Apollo and Manchester Mills) in Bombay in the latter part of 1927, in which the reformist leadership despite the magnificent stand of the workers did not attempt "even to maintain the already damnable economic conditions of the workers".<sup>73</sup> Taking note of the rise in consciousness among the workers expressed in the upsurge of spontaneous strikes in the post first world war period the resolution points out that the workers are ready for a militant lead. The resolution points out that the time is ripe for the rank-and-file workers themselves to lead their struggles and also to come forward to man leading organs of unions, factory committees, trade councils. The resolution puts forward finally a charter of the basic demands of the workers many of which are still to be realised. The resolution stresses the importance of working out the urgent demands for individual industries, e.g. mines, railways, textiles, etc., so as to rally the workers there and to spread trade-union movement to all industries and transport services.

The resolution on the peasants (Document 17), while stressing the role of this vast majority in the national movement, does not go beyond putting forward the main demands of the peasantry against the statutory landlords and big landowners—reduction of excessive rents extorted by the landlords, lowering of the land revenue in the ryotwari areas and the protection of the peasants from the exploitation of the moneylenders by means of usurious interests. We have included further concrete demands of the peasantry put forward in the second provincial conference of the PWP in Bengal held in February 1927, which are more concrete showing more actual experience about the work amongst the peasantry. Both the resolutions put forward the central demand of abolition of all intermediaries between the cultivating peasants and the government. The Bengal resolution puts it in a more advanced form "as the abolition of landlordism and the nationalisation of land". The Bengal resolution also de-

73. For details of these strikes see *Documents*, Vol III-B, pp 85-87.

mands that the rental must not exceed more than 10 per cent of the actual income from the produce. About debts the Bengal resolution puts forward the demand: "There should be no transfer of land in case of failure of the peasants to pay their debt." The weakness of the resolution is that it makes no mention of the struggle and organisation of the peasants for winning their most urgent demands. For instance, there is no mention of the fight against the extortion by the landlords of illegal dues over and above the already high rentals. Similarly, there is no mention of serf-like labour extorted from the poor peasants and agricultural workers by the landlords and organising their fight against it.

The resolution on organisation (Document 18) is actually an explanation of the constitution of WPP Bengal which has also been printed here along with the organisational resolution. First thing to note is that the WPP has individual as well as affiliated membership. Individual members are those who not only accept the program and policy of the party but are active in one or the other fields of mass activities like trade union, peasant association, youth and student union and in the field of party journalism, propaganda and agitation. Apart from this trade unions and peasant associations and youth and student organisations affiliated to the WPP are able to send a certain number of members to be represented in the corresponding WPP bodies. The organisation resolution also points out how the work of its members active in different mass fronts is guided and controlled by the groups and the fractions of the party in those fronts. It puts forward the program for training the party workers in the policy and program of the party as well as to equip them with necessary training and knowledge to discharge their tasks in their respective fronts. This it does through its party organs, ie journals, literature and training classes.

This resolution adopted by the WPPs of Bombay and Bengal already visualises the organisation of the party on an all-India scale.

The Workers and Peasants Party in Bengal and Bombay

had their own journals in Bengali and Marathi respectively in 1928. We have already given the history of *Langal* and *Ganavani* in the earlier parts of the volume (1926 and 1927). The report of PWP Bengal of 1927-1928 presented at the Bhatpara conference records that *Ganavani*, which began publication on 12 August 1926 and stopped on 12 October 1926 (9 issues), reappeared again on 14 April 1927 and continued up to 27 October 1927 (23 issues). This repeated stoppage of the publication was mainly due to financial difficulties as has been recorded by Muzaffar Ahmad in his report. It reappeared only on 14 June 1928 and continued up to 13 October 1928 (in all 23 issues) and was not republished up to the arrest of the editor, M. Ahmad, in the Meerut case on 20 March 1929. Some of the copies published in 1928 are available in the Meerut record (now deposited in the National Archives, New Delhi).

In 1928 *Ganavani* continued to play its role as the organ of the Workers and Peasants Party of Bengal and as one of the first militant organs of the working class in Bengali. It commented on the main political events of the week and reported on the workingclass struggles. For instance it gave comments of the WPPs on the report of the All Parties Conference published in August 1928 (*Ganavani*, 23 August 1928). It published an article on the Bardoli peasants' struggle. It commented on the public safety bill and the trade disputes bill which were currently before the Legislative Assembly. Muzaffar Ahmad's comments on the publication in *Statesman* of the so-called Roy Letter which figured in the Legislative Assembly in connection with the public safety bill appeared in *Ganavani* of 23 August 1928. Contemporary workingclass struggles reported and commented upon are Bauria (Fort Gloucester) Jute Mills strike, Calcutta Scavengers strike, the famous Lilloah EI Railway workers' strike, Bombay textile workers' strike and Dhakeswari cotton mill strike etc. It also reported the SI Railway strike in which not only the workshop but also the gangmen and signalmen took part paralysing rail movement. The report mentions the arrest of M. Singaravelu and Mukundalal Sarkar (later in 1929 sentenced to 10 years

रि). It reported the opening of the sixth congress of the CPI in Moscow. It published an article on the Soviet Union, a translation of the revolutionary song "Internationale", a short life sketch of the German communist leader Clara Zetkin (the latter two sent by Soumyendranath Tagore from Berlin). It also published an article exposing the anti-workingclass nature of fascism which had emerged in Italy at that time. This cursory "sample survey" of the contents of the 23 issues of *Ganavani* gives the reader an idea of the character of this organ of the WPP Bengal.

*Kranti*, the weekly organ of the WPP Bombay in Marathi, which stopped publication in November 1927, was re-started on 30 June 1928 under the editorship of S. A. Dange when the great general strike of the textile workers in Bombay was beginning its fourth month. Though a weekly it appeared in the form of a daily paper (crown size). It was dominantly a workingclass paper which up to 5 October 1928, when the great textile strike ended, was giving week to week reports on the progress of the strike apart from the comments on contemporary national and international events. It came out with a special one-page edition to announce the end of the strike as a partial victory for the workers in as much as the millowners had to agree to maintain the status quo in relation to their offensive of wage-cut and retrenchment against the workers. The paper continued to appear up to the date when its editor S. A. Dange was arrested along with the communist and trade-union leaders of Bombay in the Meerut case on 20 March 1929, the last issue being of 17 March 1928. Following notes from the contents of the issues of 1928 will give the reader some idea of the paper.

*"Kranti" New Series—Vol. II.*

- No. 1, 30-6-1928—Reports about the start of negotiations between joint strike committee of the textile workers with the millowners.  
 —Reports of trade-union activities amongst tramway workers, dock workers and GIP Railway workers.

- No. 2, 5-7-28 —Records receipt of Rs 21,000 sent as a relief to the striking textile workers of Bombay by the All Union Textile Workers' Organisation, Moscow.  
—Records relief of Rs 10,000 sent by the Soviet workers for the striking workers of EI Railway (Lilooah).
- No. 3, 8-7-28 —Records the announcement of the joint strike committee ... Grain relief will be distributed to the striking textile workers from next week.
- No. 4, 12-7-28 —Gives a list of the important strikes of workers all over India.
- No. 5, 15-7-28 —Publishes an article on the Russian Revolution under the title "What History Tells Us".
- No. 6, 19-7-28 —Describes brutal exploitation of tenant peasants of UP and Bengal at the hands of the landlords and demands abolition of landlordism.  
—Reports Soviet exploration of North pole.
- No. 7, 22-7-28 —Reports of the exploitation of the GIP Rly workers ... Wage rise—50%, rise in living cost—93%.
- No. 8, 26-7-28 —Lists of recent arrests and prosecution of communist and leftwing leaders—P. Spratt and S. S. Mirajkar, Dange and Nimbkar, Muzaffar Ahmad, Bhag Singh and Sambamurthy etc.
- No. 9, 29-7-28 —Special issue devoted to "3½ months Bombay Textile General Strike".
- No. 10, 2-8-28 —WPP's open letter to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel after the end of the Bardoli peasants' struggle; ... demand for an enquiry not enough, peasants should demand reduction of land revenue; Bombay workers will support the peasants' struggle.

- Report of municipal workers' strike in Delhi.
- Publishes names of jobbers who are acting as strike-breakers in the Bombay textile general strike.
- No. 11, 5-8-28 —Appreciatingly quotes Gandhiji's statement on Bardoli... 80,000 peasants' struggle has forced the government to come to the negotiation table.
- No. 12, 9-8-28 —Lists the total aid received by the joint strike committee for the Bombay textile general strike from 7 May to 6 August 1928...total received Rs 75,000 out of which Rs 35,516 from workers, Rs 25,100 from British, French and general workers, Rs 4322 from the Workers' Welfare League of India.
- No. 13, 12-8-28 —Decision of the government of Bombay to appoint a negotiation committee for the Bombay textile strike.
  - Exposure of trade disputes bill in the Legislative Assembly.
- No. 14, 17-8-28 —A procession of 30,000 workers marching to the Bombay docks from where they proceed to their respective villages by boat.
  - An article criticises the agreement which brought the Bardoli peasants' struggle to an end.
- No. 15, 19-8-28 —(No comment)
- No. 16, 23-8-28 —"Owners Say Arrest the Communists" we say "All Workers Should Become Communist".
- No. 17, 30-8-28 —Features an article with a 5 column headline on the front page "Every Militant Worker is a Communist".
  - "What Communists Demand".
  - "What Communists Say".
  - "How do You Recognise a Communist?"



- No. 18, 2-9-28 —Features an article with the headline: "Call to the Workers to join the Congress —Workers should take control of the Congress"—records Congress Committee paid Rs 3000 for the relief of the striking textile workers of Bombay.  
—Announces third conference of the WPP Punjab at Lyalpur, Dange to preside.
- No. 19, 6-9-28 —Records grain worth Rs 80,000 distributed to the striking workers so far.  
—A column publishing letters of workers started; editor invites workers to write letters to *Kranti* expressing their comments, complaints and opinion.
- No. 20 —(Missing)
- No. 21, 20-9-28 —Reports another boat leaves taking 1000 striking workers to their villages.
- No. 22, 27-9-28 —General strike negotiations enter the final stage—Dange not leaving for Punjab.
- No. 23, 5-10-28 —Headline announcing the end of the strike.  
—Workers have won—Workers' victory  
—Old wage rates maintained.
- No. 24, 13-10-28 —Main 5 column headline!  
—"Strike is not settled, it is only postponed".  
—Enquiry Committee appointed.  
—Call to enrol 1 lakh members of the GKU.
- No. 25, 4-11-28 —Call to workers to unleash a new wave of strikes.
- No. 26, 12-11-28 —Gives a call for 1 lakh union members—2 lakh strike fund—5000 worker-volunteers—1000 worker-speakers.
- No. 27, 25-11-28 —Call to workers to set up secret groups to lead militant workers organisation.

The last two issues of *Kranti* of the year 1928 dated 9 and 16 December are devoted to instructions given to the workers, who are now organised, to elect mill committees in almost every one of the big mills. Workers were asked to elect a president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer of

each mill committee. They were also asked to elect one person from each mill to represent the mill on the managing committee of the Girni Kamgar Union. In the poststrike days workers in individual mills would go on strike on minor grievances due to new confidence in their organisation and unity won through the strike. *Kranti* through these two issues gave instruction to the workers not to go on such strikes until advised by the union. It also warned them that the owners would now try to ban union activities, such as collection of subscription etc. inside the mill compound. It asked the workers to strengthen the organisation of the mill committees and of the Red Flag Union in the coming months by steady work and prepare for the coming battle and called on the workers to read *Kranti* and raise funds so that it can have its own press.

The issue of 16 December describes how the goondas of the millowners organised an attack of stonethrowing on Nimbkar and his colleagues who went to a mill to enquire about a reported incident there. In this attack several workers were wounded. When this news spread a large number of enraged workers with red flag in their hands were marching to the union office to make enquiries. The police stopped them and took away the red flags resulting a clash between the police and the workers in which according to the contemporary press reports: "... 9 killed, 50 injured".<sup>74</sup> *Kranti* reports this incident in banner headline and describes how after this provocative attack by the police the union intervened calling a meeting of the workers next day and prevented a closure of the mills on the issue.

The issue of 9 December announces the start of the annual session of the AITUC at Jharia. It also announces the all-India conference of Workers and Peasants Party which was to meet in the last week of December under the presidentship of Sohan Singh Josh.

The emergence of the workers and peasants party (Kirti Kisan Party) in Punjab, its role and activities in 1928 are recorded in two documents which are reproduced here

<sup>74</sup> *Indian Annual Register* gives the date of the incident as 12 December 1928—cf. chronology for 1928.

(Documents 19 and 20). The first is mainly the relevant extract from the statement of Sohan Singh Josh and the second an editorial note on the subject in the *Kirti* magazine of May 1928. Some information is also available in the statement of Abdul Majid, who was the joint secretary of the party of which Sohan Singh Josh was the general secretary.

The inaugural conference which founded the party took place on 12 April 1928 at Jallianwala Bagh. It was attended by prominent leftwing leaders of Punjab and NWFP who came there at the invitation of Sohan Singh Josh and Bhag Singh Canadian. Among them were Raizada Hansraj who presided over the meeting. Dr Satyapal, Bhai Gopal Singhji, Master Kabul Singh and Lala Ramchandra. Firozuddin Mansur, Mir Abdul Majid and Kedarnath Sehgal were the prominent WPP leaders, who along with Sohan Singh Josh were organisers of the party. This conference appointed a subcommittee to draw up the rules and regulations of the party and the first conference of the party met at Hoshiarpur. Sohan Singh points out in his statement that the Kirti Kisan Party was to work on the same lines as the WPP of Bombay and Bengal, to build the class organisation of workers and peasants and to fight for a militant policy in the freedom movement, ie, for "... establishment of the national democratic independence through revolution". Abdul Majid in his statement before the Meerut court emphasises the same point stating that the program of the Kirti Kisan Party is a revolutionary one, ie of achieving complete independence and democracy. The second conference of the Kirti Kisan Party held at Lyalpur on 28, 29 and 30 September 1928 was a big mobilisation of the peasants to fight the prolandlord, promoneylender policies of the Zamindara League which was also pursuing a pro-British Loyalist policy. This campaign was systematically continued in the third conference at Rohtak at which Sohan Singh Josh plainly told the peasants that no change in their conditions would take place unless the land-hunger of the majority of the peasants were satisfied and the peasants organise themselves to realise the same.

*Kirti* (ie Worker) monthly magazine in Punjabi, which as we have seen came into existence much earlier (in 1926), later functioned as the political and cultural organ of the Kirti Kisan Party after it came into existence in 1928. Its Urdu edition (also a monthly) which began in April 1928, also played the same role. *Mehanatkash* (Toiler) an Urdu weekly, of which some issues were published in 1928, was a workingclass paper with which Abdul Majid was associated was acting in support of the trade-union activities in Punjab especially its work among the woollen mill workers of Dhariwal.

The Workers and Peasants Party of UP and Delhi was formed at the conference held in Meerut on 14, 15 and 16 October 1928. We are reproducing here the report of the conference which appeared in the *Krantikari*, Hindi weekly, dated 24 November 1928 (Document 21). As stated in the report, the conference was attended by Sohan Singh Josh, Abdul Majid and Kedarnath Sehgal. P. Spratt and Muzaffar Ahmad specially came to guide the conference. The conference was well prepared. The address of the president, Kedarnath Sehgal, was printed in Urdu and distributed at the conference.<sup>75</sup> The resolutions placed before the conference and adopted were also made available to the delegates in a printed pamphlet in Hindi.<sup>76</sup> *Krantikari*, from which the report is reproduced, is described by P. C. Joshi as the organ of the WPP of UP and Delhi.<sup>77</sup> It made its appearance on 17 November 1928 under the editorship of Krishna Gopal Sharma of Jhansi. Some 15 issues of this weekly came out up to 25 February 1929, some of which are in the record of Meerut Case.<sup>78</sup> P. C. Joshi, who was elected secretary at the conference, described the party in his statement at the Meerut case is as follows:

“The Workers and Peasants Party was a mass anti-imperialist party; it was a party of those classes whose interests are opposed to imperialism in a revolutionary

75. Meerut Record, P 1101 and P 198.

76. Ibid, P 348.

77. Ibid, P 1620, P. C. Joshi's letter to C. G. Shah.

78. Ibid, P 1420 and P 1421.

manner. Its membership consisted of the affiliated trade unions, peasants' unions, revolutionary youth organisations and revolutionary intellectuals." Some time after the conference Joshi made a plan of producing short pamphlets in Hindi to popularise the policy and program of the party among the peasants, especially on the peasant question. He also wanted a pamphlet on the peasant struggle of Bardoli for reduction of land revenue.

The centres of the party at that time and its incharges were: Gorakhpur—Biswanath Mukherji, Delhi—Firozuddin Mansur, Meerut—Gauri Shankar and Jhansi—Krishna Gopal Sharma, editor, *Krantikari*.

The work of the party in the beginning seems to be mainly holding meetings and conferences to popularise the militant program of the party, to increase circulation of *Krantikari* and training cadres for organisational and practical work among the peasants.

At the end of October 1928 the party held a conference at Jhansi. It was in the nature of a propaganda conference to popularise the policy of the party.

## VI

### EMERGENCE OF THE YOUTH MOVEMENT AS A PART OF LEFTWING REVOLUTIONARY UPSURGE

In the resolution on youth adopted by the enlarged executive meeting of the Workers and Peasants Party, Bombay on 29 January 1928 which was later adopted in the conferences of the party in Bombay and Bengal in March 1928, attention is drawn to the emergence of youth organisations in the provinces and the role they were playing in supporting the militant policy in the national freedom movement, and participating in national revolutionary activities and in building the militant class organisations of workers and peasants. The resolution proposed support to such youth organisations consistently participating in militant mass activities as well as in ge-

neral youth organisations for supporting militant trends there. We are recording in this section the work of the WPP in this connection.

In the then Bombay presidency there emerged in the beginning of 1928 a Bombay Presidency Youth League, which held its first conference at the end of January 1928. The initiative to form this organisation by leftwing congress youth to inculcate patriotism, nationalism as opposed to communalism and consistent anti-imperialism. The organisers of this conference were not in touch with the national revolutionary activities nor with the new rising workers' and peasants' movements which had already begun in other parts of the country and the militant workers' movement particularly in Bombay.

The conference supported the boycott of the Simon commission in general without reference to any militant action by the masses and at a time when the Indian National Congress had passed a resolution of complete independence, this conference merely asserted by resolution India's right to selfdetermination. It is on record that S. S. Mirajkar and S. A. Dange participated in this conference, S. A. Dange supporting the resolution on boycott of Simon commission and S. S. Mirajkar supporting the resolution on unemployment by demanding India's industrialisation.

This Bombay Presidency Youth League seems to have held its second conference in Poona in December 1928.

It is interesting to note that the record of the resolutions passed at its first conference were seized from its office in Bombay in the searches and arrests in connection of the Meerut conspiracy case and was produced as a prosecution exhibit.<sup>79</sup> This conference was presided by K. F. Nariman. Among those who participated were Indulal Yagnik, who was to be organiser of All India Kisan Sabha later, Yusuf J. Meherally was later to be one of the leaders of the Congress Socialist Party and V. K. R. V. Rao who was later a prominent economist. It does not

<sup>79</sup>. Meerut Record, P 1053.

appear that the Workers and Peasants Party was able to play any significant role in it or build its own youth organisation in that period in Bombay, being fully occupied with the great textile strike and with the organisation of Girni Kamgar Union (Red flag) after the termination of the strike. This account was confirmed by what Spratt wrote about the Bombay Provincial Youth League in the letter in reply to Mrs Mellonie who was asking about the youth organisations in India, particularly about the workingclass youth. "In Bombay, the Bombay Provincial Youth League", Spratt writes, "is practically the only organisation now in existence. It is almost confined to students. There is also, I should mention, a 'Young India Society' which is really a sort of caucus controlling the Bombay Provincial Youth League. In Bombay the Workers and Peasants Party members were active in the last conference and brought in their point of view to some extent."<sup>80</sup> It is only towards the end of 1929 or the beginning of 1930 that a workingclass youth organisation called the Young Workers League came into existence which played considerable role in the thirties in organising militant workers and drawing them in the political activities.

The role and character of the youth organisations which emerged in the Punjab and Bengal was quite different from the one which emerged in the Bombay presidency as the Bombay Youth League. The initiative to organise the youth in the Punjab and Bengal was taken by youth leaders who were already influenced by the activities of the national revolutionary groups or the workers and peasants parties. We are reproducing here the account of Naujavan Bharat Sabha in the Punjab as given by Sohan Singh Josh in his statement in the Meerut case (Document 22). We get additional information from the statement of Abdul Majid and Kedarnath Sehgal.

According to Abdul Majid, the Naujavan Bharat Sabha

80. Ibid, P 2102 C—Spratt's reply dated 2 August 1928 to Mrs Mellonie's letter.

emerged some time in 1926 but remained, as he says, a "debating society" until 1928. It held its first conference on 12, 13 and 14 April 1928. Kedarnath Sehgal presided over the conference at which Sohan Singh Josh and Abdul Majid were also present.

Abdul Majid in his statement in the Meerut case gives the "six-point programme" of the Naujavan Bharat Sabha. This corresponds to the "aims and objects" of the Sabha as defined in its constitution adopted by its executive elected at the first conference in its meeting held on 1 May 1928. This constitution which figures as a prosecution exhibit in the Meerut conspiracy case<sup>81</sup> defines the aims and objects of the Sabha as follows:

(a) "To establish a complete independent republic of labourers and peasants throughout India.

(b) "To inspire in the hearts of young men of the country feelings of patriotism and spirit of sacrifice for forming a united nationality in India.

(c) "To have nothing to do with communal bodies or other parties which persist in [having] separate communal representation and which disseminate communal ideas.

(d) "To create the spirit of general toleration among the public considering religion as a matter of personal belief of man's and to act upon the same fully.

(e) "To show interest for and help every economic and social movement which is quite free from communal feelings and which is calculated to take us near our goal ie to establish a complete independent republic of labourers and peasants throughout India.

(f) "To organise labourers and peasants."

Kedarnath Sehgal, who was elected the chairman of the Naujavan Bharat Sabha, had remained so up to the third week of February 1929, (ie, up to the second conference) records that several active branches of the Sabha were formed in 1928, as in Lahore, Amritsar, Gujranwala, Jaranwala (?) etc. He also records that many more

81. *Ibid*, P 205 T—translated from Urdu.



branches were formed after the Meerut case arrests as in Multan, Montgomery, Kamalia, Chamum, Gowalmandi, Wazirabad, Ambala, Saharanpur, Rohtak, Bhiwani, Simla and in other cities.

Thus in 1928 and 1929 in the Punjab Naujavan Bharat Sabha attracted into its ranks youths who were being drawn into national revolutionary activities and in the organisations of workers and peasants. In this connection it is interesting to note that Ajoy Ghosh records that Bhagat Singh who was working in the *Kirti* was responsible with his comrades to form the Naujavan Bharat Sabha in the Punjab. Ajoy Ghosh does not give any dates. But this must have been about 1927 or the beginning of 1928. He states:

“Bhagat Singh was in the meantime active in the Punjab. He and his comrades had formed the Naujavan Bharat Sabha, a militant youth organisation which was to propagate socialist ideas, preach the necessity of direct action against British rule and serve as a recruiting centre for the terrorist party. The sabha became tremendously popular in the years that followed and played a leading part in the radicalisation of the youth of the Punjab.”<sup>82</sup>

In Bengal a general youth organisation with a nationalist orientation existed since 1927 and it was called the All Bengal Youth Association. Youth organisations with national-revolutionary orientation seem to have come into existence in the early part of 1928. Gopal Basak says in his statement before the Meerut court that he advised the formation of the Young Communist League. When leading young comrades in touch with the WPP Bengal met together to form a youth organisation of such an orientation, they decided to name it as “Young Comrades’ League”. Gopen Chakravarty, one of those who took initiative in this direction, describes the Young Comrades’ League as being organised “with a view to enlist the services of the radically-minded petty-bourgeois youths in

82. Cf. his *Articles and Speeches*, Moscow, 1962, pp 15-16.

the cause of the working class and to win them over consciously to the side of the mass revolutionary movement"<sup>83</sup>

Dharani Goswami defines the composition, aims and objects of the Young Comrades' League precisely. Emphasising the urgent need of forming a youth organisation of "lower middleclass workers and poor peasants" he states: "The idea of the organisation was to give the exploited youths of those classes a correct militant and scientific lead on the basis of Marxist ideology, to create a militant movement of these youths, to redress their immediate grievances, and to help the masses, that is, the workers and peasants, in their struggle against the existing capitalist system and thereby ultimately aiming at the establishment of independent republic of India on the basis of the social, economic emancipation of the masses."

A "Statement of Program and Policy" (Document 23) was adopted by the executive of the Young Comrades' League in August 1928. The constitution which was also adopted about the same time<sup>84</sup> defines the objects as follows:

"The object of the league is to organise a radical and militant movement of the exploited and oppressed young men and women for (a) the redress of their immediate grievances, (b) the establishment of the independent republic of India on the basis of the social and economic emancipation of the masses."

Documentary informations about the emergence of youth organisations in Bengal is available in the papers seized in the office of the Young Comrades' League and in other places in Calcutta and Dacca in connection with the Meerut conspiracy case arrests. It is necessary to give a connected summary of this material here. The earliest reference we get here is the presidential address of Bhupendranath Datta which he delivered at the Dacca district Youngmen's Conference some time in 1927. This:

83. Cf. his statement in Meerut Court, p 147.

84. Meerut Record, P 502 and P 546(6).

is a printed pamphlet published by Gopalchandra Basak, Youngmen's Association, Nawabpur, Dacca.<sup>85</sup> Gopal Basak in his statement said that he was connected with bourgeois youth organisations in the early twenties and was also the secretary of the Dacca Youngmen's Association later, which means that the WPP Bengal began contacting the youth organisations since 1927.

Spratt in his letter to Mellonie also states that youth organisations existed in Bengal in 1927: "The All Bengal Youth Association, when founded (under another name in 1927) was under the influence of the party members some of whom are still on the committee which, however, never used to meet. The Congress captured it and it became entirely inactive for some time. It is now waking up again. The Workers and Peasants Party does not bother itself about this thing enough, I think."<sup>86</sup> A little earlier in the letter Spratt describes how the WPP took initiative to form the Young Comrades League: "In Bengal a beginning is only now being made. A group of a dozen or so, including one or two students and the rest 'bhadralog' (nondescript middleclass youngmen, unemployed etc.) has met two or 3 times and decided to establish a 'Young Comrades League' (Saklatvala suggested this name). Its formation will probably now be announced in a few days."<sup>87</sup>

This account given by Spratt is confirmed by documents seized from the office of Young Comrades League, Calcutta.

The earliest reference to Young Comrades League is a document found in its office. This is a letterhead of the league, containing 16 names including N. Sen Gupta, Ratan B. Hazra, Abdul Halim, D. K. Goswami, P. Spratt, who are referred to as attending a "general meeting" held on 1 February 1928.<sup>87</sup>

On 28 July 1928 the organisers of the league met and elected Nalindra Sen Gupta, 'protem' (provisional) secretary and decided about membership subscription.

In the meeting held on 11 August 1928 the organisers

85. Ibid, P 264.

86. Ibid, P 210 C.

87. Ibid, P 565.

of the league elected an executive committee consisting of P. Spratt, A. Roy, D. K. Goswami, P. Mukherji, N Bhattacharya, A. Hazra and A. Halim. They also appointed a subcommittee to draft the constitution and the rules and regulations of the league as well as its program and policy.

This executive also discussed and adopted the draft of the constitution and rules and of the program and policy. The Bengali name of the organisation was suggested as "Tarun Bandhu Dal". It was also decided to form branches at Dacca, Barisal and Mymensingh.

By the end of August the constitution and the program and policy were printed and a program of political work was prepared. This consisted of holding training classes for members of the league and establishing relations with other leftist youth organisations and "study of youth movements and working and other conditions of youths, collection of materials and library". They also drafted a tentative charter of the demands of youth—(a) living wage, (b) state support for unemployed youth, (c) abolition of all social superstitions, (d) education, (e) physical culture, (f) to organise a workers' defence corps.<sup>88</sup>

The initiative for the formation of the Young Comrades League was taken by the WPP Bengal. This is proved by the fact that the leading members of the WPP took the initiative in forming the league and that its activities were reported in *Ganavani*, the Bengali organ of the party. This is further proved by a document found in the papers of the WPP office, purporting to be a proposed program of work of the "youth section of the WPP" by Ashutosh Roy, member of the executive of Young Comrades League. This program consisted of: training of youth cadres on the basis of a syllabus covering subjects: (a) "Capitalism, imperialism, (b) working class, (c) socialism, (d) presentday India, (e) youth movement"; coordinating activities with other leftist youth organisations, organising the workingclass youth and forming a federated youth move-

88. Ibid, P 563.

ment. It also stressed the participation of the members of the YCL in the activities of WPP such as selling of party paper *Ganavani* and providing correspondents for it.<sup>89</sup>

We have no information as to how this program was implemented but it is on record that the YCL held general body meetings, conducted study circle activities among the youth. It was affiliated to WPP Bengal and as such was called upon to send 50 delegates to All India Workers and Peasants Party conference held in December 1928 at Calcutta. According to Gopal Basak, Ashu Roy read a report of the Young Comrades League at the conference.<sup>90</sup>

The Young Comrades League, Bengal, was more directly a youth organisation of the CPI and the WPP. The Youth League, Bombay, was a broad youth organisation which came into existence independently of the WPP and in the conference of which the WPP members, as we have seen, participated. In the Punjab, the Naujawan Bharat Sabha was also a broad organisation and the WPP had taken a leading part in organising the sabha. Kedarnath Sehgal, who took pride in identifying himself with the sabha, in his Meerut case statement, also emphasised that he was not a member of the WPP. National-revolutionary groups also took part in the activities of the sabha—we have seen Bhagat Singh was one of the members of the sabha.

But the Young Comrades League from its very beginning was closely associated with the CPI and WPP as we have seen from Gopal Basak's statement referred to earlier and also from Spratt's reference that Saklatvala suggested the name. WPP of Bengal paid great attention to the organisation of Young Comrades League. Four out of the seven members of the executive committee of the league were leading members of the WPP (Dharani Goswami, Abdul Halim, Ashutosh Roy and Philip Spratt),<sup>91</sup> WPP organised a special youth section of which Ashu Roy

89. Ibid, P 546(4).

90. Ibid, P 284

91. Ibid, P 565.

was the secretary.<sup>92</sup> A large number of documents seized in the Meerut case searches from Calcutta give proof of the intensive work the WPP conducted among the youth. This work enabled the WPP to draw in many young men and women into its active organisational work, such as selling its paper, organising meetings, etc.

Above all the WPP in Bengal seems to have made a conscious effort to draw in national-revolutionary groups into the Young Comrades League and to a certain extent into the party. We get some evidence of this in a document on the Young Comrades League by Nagen Sarkar who was a member of its general body and who is from Mymensingh, now in Bangladesh. Nagen Sarkar says that leading members of the WPP in the course of their work came in touch with national-revolutionary groups (terrorists) and "...most of them accepted communism as their ideal", and "as a result of this they felt the need of organising an independent revolutionary Young Communist League and it was established." Nagen Sarkar further states that the leaders of the WPP secretly met "revolutionary terrorists" and "after discussing everything they decided to organise Young Comrades League". This reminiscence of Nagen Sarkar is not confirmed by any documentary evidence nor corroborated by leading WPP members of that period who were the organisers of the YCL then and are with us today. But it is a fact that in those days young cadres of the national-revolutionary groups or parties (miscalled "terrorists") were turning to the path of mass revolution, to the organisations of workers and peasants and to the ideas of scientific socialism. Many of these joined the Young Comrades League. This fact is stated by Nagen Sarkar and is correct.

This growing trend towards socialist ideas among the radical youth of Bengal is further proved by the fact that an "All India Socialist Youth Congress" met in Calcutta in the last week of December 1928, some documents of which figured in the Meerut conspiracy case as

92. *Ibid*, P 546(4).

prosecution exhibits. It appears, however, that the initiative for organising this congress was taken by elements outside the WPP and Communist Party. Organisers of this congress in their preparatory bulletin published in November 1928 invited—"Youths of the country holding marxist view... to become members of the reception committee and all youth organisations and trade unions are requested to send delegates to the congress." In the same bulletin intending delegates were asked to send resolutions in the form of thesis by 15 December 1928.<sup>93</sup> Further, there is a letter on record from the secretary of the reception committee of the first All India Socialist Youth Congress to Gopen Chakravarty requesting him to join the reception committee of the Congress.<sup>94</sup> A detailed record of the proceeding of this Congress is not available, but Gopal Basak seems to have attended it and a long resolution sent by him to the Congress is on record.<sup>95</sup> He called upon in the resolution for organising the left-wing youth turning to radical socialist ideas into a "Young Communist League".

The Socialist Youth Congress was held at the Rammohan hall in Calcutta on 27 December 1928 at the time when the session of the Indian National Congress was being held in Calcutta at the Park Circus maidan. Dr Bhupendra-nath Dutta was the chairman of the Reception Committee and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was the president.

Dutta in his speech drew the attention of the youth with marxist views to give a socio-economic analysis of the situation and suggested the formation of many study circles for the same.

Jawaharlal Nehru in his speech said that according to him, "only by true socialism was there any chance for the independence of the country to be achieved. Socialism is not a mere war cry but needs to be learnt, studied and practised."

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93. Ibid, P 141.

94. Ibid, P 282.

95. Ibid, P 145.

There was a long six-point resolution which (i) condemned the shooting affairs at Bamangachi, Bombay and Bauria; (ii) condemned the trade disputes bill and public safety bill; (iii) demanded complete independence and not dominion status; (iv) declared communism as the way out; (v) study circles to be formed as one of its organisational directives; and (vi) suggested dictatorship of the proletariat as the concrete form in which a socialist way can be worked out.<sup>95a</sup>

## VII

### THE STRIKE UPSURGE OF 1928 AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE MILITANT TU MOVEMENT

1928 was the year of the first most widespread massive and militant strike upsurge of the Indian working class before independence. Workers were resisting the offensive of wagecut and retrenchment launched by the capitalists, Indian and foreign, to maintain their superprofits which had now begun to decline in the context of the coming depression. Workers in all the major industries and transport services of the period were drawn into the struggle. Textile workers of Bombay, jute workers of Calcutta, railway workers of East India Railway and the South Indian Railway (led by the workshopmen of Liloah, EIR, and Golden Rock, Madras, SIR) and the iron and steel workers of Jamshedpur. They were all in revolt against the intolerable conditions being forced on them.

Both Dange and Joglekar have dealt extensively with the strike upsurge in their statements in the Meerut case in which they prominently dealt with the contemporary trade-union movement. The joint general statement of the 18 communist accused has characterised the strike up-

95a. *Indian Quarterly Register*, July-December 1928.



surge in the following words: "By 1927 it was possible to see clearly that a new wave of workingclass activity was rising and in 1928-29 it showed itself in an almost unprecedented number of strikes in almost all industries. The railwaymen were involved in four important railways, the textile workers in Bombay and at least six other centres, the greater part of the jute workers, the workers at Jamshedpur and municipal and several other categories of workers at many centres in all parts of the country."<sup>96</sup> Clemens Dutt, who was keenly observing the new strike upsurge as a part of the new rising phase of India's national-liberation movement, characterises its main feature thus: "The present strike movement displays several notable characteristics. In the first place, it is very widespread, strikes taking place in all parts in India. Secondly, the strike was of mass character, all workers, whether organised or not, taking part, very frequently being assisted by sympathetic strikes among workers not immediately affected. This is seen also in the persistent threat of a general strike as in the case of the Madras strike last year where the Madras workers as a whole threatened to come out in support of the strikers of the Burma Oil Co. etc."<sup>97</sup> He also notes that the strike upsurge was being led by new militant leaders who are counteracting the compromising moves of the old reformist leaders seeking to check or prevent militant actions by the workers. Rajani Palme Dutt, writing much later, has assessed the significance of the strike upsurge of 1928, in his *India Today* as follows: "1928 saw the greatest tide of workingclass advance and activity of any year of the postwar period [post-world-war-I—ED]. The centre of this advance was in Bombay. For the first time a workingclass leadership had emerged, close to the workers in the factories, guided by the principles of the class struggle, and

96. Meerut Record, General Statement of 18 Communist Accused, P 2911. Cf. also Muzaffar Ahmad, ed., *Communists Challenge Imperialism from the Dock*, 1967, p 259.

97. *Communist International*, Vol 5, No 14, 15 July 1928. Clemens Dutt, "India's Part in World Revolution".

operating as a single force in the economic and political field. The response of the workers was overwhelming... The strike movement during 1928 totalled 31½ million working days, or more than the previous five years together. Although the Bombay textile workers were the centre, the movement was spread over India. Of the 203 disputes, 111 were in Bombay, 60 in Bengal, 8 in Bihar and Orissa, 7 in Madras and 2 in the Punjab; 110 were in the cotton and wool textile industry, 19 in jute, 11 in the engineering workshops, 9 on the railways and in the railway workshops and 1 in coal-mining.”””

It should be noted that though the strike upsurge of 1928 records the highest peak of mandays lost for any year of the preindependence period, the highest strike activity in terms of number of strikes and the workers involved is reached in 1946 and 1947 when the political significance of the strike activities of the Indian working class reached the highest level and the working class became a leading force in the revolutionary upsurge of those years in protest against the repression on the INA prisoners and in defence of the revolt of the naval ratings of the RIN and in sympathy of the strikes of the men of the Royal Air Force in their respective establishments. This will be clear from the table of strike statistics of the preindependence years given below:

STRIKE STRUGGLES IN INDIA (1921-1947)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Strikes &amp; lockouts</i>	<i>Number of workers participated</i>	<i>Mandays lost</i>
1921	396	6,00,351	69,84,426
1922	278	4,33,434	39,72,727
1923	213	3,01,044	50,51,704
1924	133	3,12,462	87,30,918
1925	134	2,70,423	1,25,78,129
1926	128	1,86,811	10,97,478
1927	129	1,31,655	20,19,970
1928	203	5,06,851	3,16,47,404

1929	141	5,32,016	1,21,65,691
1930	148	1,96,301	22,61,731
1931	166	2,03,008	24,08,123
1932	118	1,28,099	19,22,437
1933	146	1,64,938	21,68,961
1934	159	2,20,808	47,75,559
1935	145	1,14,217	9,73,457
1936	157	1,69,029	23,58,062
1937	379	6,47,801	89,82,000
1938	399	4,01,075	91,98,708
1939	406	4,09,189	49,92,795
1940	322	4,52,529	75,77,281
1941	359	2,91,054	33,30,503
1942	694	7,72,653	57,79,965
1943	716	5,25,088	23,42,287
1944	658	5,50,515	34,47,306
1945	848	7,82,192	33,40,892
1946	1,619	19,61,948	1,27,17,762
1947	1,811	18,40,784	1,65,62,666

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### *The Great Textile Strike*

Document 24 gives a detailed account of the great textile strike by S. A. Dange which is extracted from his statement made in the Meerut conspiracy case. Document 25 is a brief article by Ben Bradley which highlights some of the salient features of the strike. This article which was probably meant for *Labour Monthly* is reproduced here from a typed copy found in the search in connection with the Meerut conspiracy case. The strike arose as a result of the offensive of the millowners against the workers by enforcing wagecuts, workload and retrenchment when they found that the superprofits which they were making in the war period began to decline in the late twenties. The initiative in this direction was taken by the owners of the Sassoon group of mills who introduced the system of three looms instead of two and two spinning frames instead of one per worker. The idea was to increase production not by improving machineries but by increasing workload and cutting the piece rate in the weaving section under the plea of increased production, and thus introducing wagecuts and also reduction

in the number of workers. The millowners knew that the new system would meet with the resistance of the workers so they decided to introduce it group by group. 20,000 Sassoon mill workers struck work to oppose this system in January 1928. It continued for 2 months and ultimately the workers had to go back by the end of February.

At that time there were two unions of the textile workers: the Bombay Textile Labour Union (BTLU) led by N. M. Joshi and R. R. Bakhale and the Girni Kamgar Mahamandal (GKM) led by Mayekar and Alve, both textile workers. It was clear from the beginning that this was the beginning of a general offensive on the textile workers by the millowners and could only be met by a general strike. N. M. Joshi of the BTLU knew this but was not sure whether resistance of the workers by a general strike was possible.

K. N. Joglekar was at that time active in the GKM. He had started work among the working class much earlier. In his statement in the Meerut case he states that he began his work among the Bombay textile workers in 1923 and was active in their general strike in 1924 and 1925. He says that he had participated in the first May Day meeting and demonstration of the workers of Bombay in 1926. He had taken part in the Apollo and Manchester mills strike in September 1927.

Discontent in the individual mills of the Sassoon group against the new system seems to have begun at the end of December 1927, but the actual strike started on 2 or 3 January 1928. Joglekar states that he was at that time in Madras attending the Madras congress session. He hastened back to Bombay to participate in the strike.<sup>99</sup> He found that the secretary of GKM, Mayekar, was against a general strike in support of the Sassoon mill workers' struggle against the new system. Joglekar records that after the first week of January, the WPP, Bombay, in its executive meeting, considered the strike situation and decided to issue a leaflet exposing the com-

<sup>99</sup>. Meerut Record, Joglekar's statement, P 1988.

promising attitude of Mayekar which was out of tune with the militant temper of the Sassoon mill strikers.<sup>100</sup> Joglekar says that our party with the support of the bulk of the ranks of the GKM fought bravely against a new attack of reduction of rates and retrenchment and it was in the course of the struggle "that workers realised the difference between the militant class policy followed by the WPP and the welfare policy of Mr Mayekar". Joglekar further records: "I took a prominent part in this strike and helped in the organisation of the struggle of the workers, a strike committee was elected to carry on the fight of which I was a member." Though the workers fought heroically they did not succeed in forcing the Sassoon millowners to give up introducing the new system. The strike began to fizzle out and by the end of February, Joglekar records that in the meeting held on 25 February 1928, he persuaded the strikers to withdraw this strike.

The failure of the resistance of the 20,000 workers of the Sassoon group of mills to the introduction of the new system emboldened millowners to introduce it in other mills. It enabled the militant section of the GKM led by Alve to see that the offensive against the Sassoon mill workers was the beginning against all the mill workers and could only be met by a general strike as was foretold by the WPP. The result was a handbill issued by A. A. Alve on or about 26 March 1928 on behalf of GKM, as its president, which has been quoted by Dange in his statement as reproduced in Document 24. This handbill says: "We workers cannot be able to cope up with this unless in the end we all become one and tenaciously declare a general strike."<sup>101</sup> Dange further says that this handbill had not given any definite call for a general strike. In between 26 March and 9 April the millowners began to post notices about the introduction of the new system in several mills and the discontent of the workers began to rise. Reacting to this situation A. A.

100. This was issued on 14 January 1928. See Meerut Record, D, 519.

101. Meerut Record, P 1464 and D 439.

Alve on behalf of the GKM released another handbill on 9 April which says: The millowner "with the intention of devising means for reducing the workers' wages by 25 per cent are resorting to one or other device."<sup>102</sup> The leaflet plainly told the workers that the attack of the owners cannot be averted without a general strike. As a result of this leaflet and the rising discontent among the workers, strike action began to spread and on 15 April, as *Labour Gazette* records, a huge procession organised by "BTLU, GKM and the WPP" paraded the streets asking the workers to bring about a general strike and by 16 April 20,262 workers were on strike.<sup>103</sup> The rising tempo of the workers was reflected in a mass meeting organised by the GKM in Nagu Sayaji Wadi which formed a strike committee to conduct the general strike. From this meeting an enthusiastic procession of the workers marched to a nearby place where the BTLU, which had not yet taken a definite stand, to persuade them to join the general strike of the textile workers. It is important to note, as Bradley has recorded, that in the first weeks of April the entire mill area was converted into an "armed camp" and posse of armed police were posted at every millgate. Despite this intimidation the processions of workers already on strike going round the mill area calling upon the workers to join the strike continued. In the course of this a historic event occurred on 23 April leading to the martyrdom of Parsuram Yadav and serious injury to another worker. In his defence statement before the Meerut court Bradley records that in the morning of 23 April workers of Goldmohar mill going home were stopped at Sewri by a posse of armed policemen who then attempted to disperse them. In the trouble that followed the police opened fire and killed Parsuram Yadav. Bradley further says: "I arrived on the spot shortly after this incident and saw the dead body of the worker. A large crowd of strikers who were standing around were natur-

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102. Meerut Record, P 1465.

103. *Bombay Labour Gazette*, October 1928, pp 147-66.

ally in a very agitated state. In defence of this murder, the police officer who ordered the firing claimed that the workers were going to attack the New City mill, but this mill was at least a mile away from where the workers were attacked by the police and from this position not a mill could be seen."<sup>104</sup>

In Document 25 Bradley describes the reaction of the workers to this gruesome murder by the police and the funeral procession in the following words: "It was a tragic sight, the body was placed on an improvised stretcher carried by four workers, and thousands of workers formed a huge procession... The funeral procession was most imposing; workers marched with red flags in their hands and shouting, 'Down with capitalism'; 'Down with imperialism'; 'Long Live the workers' etc."

The *Labour Gazette* records that by 23 April mills employing 47,199 workers were on strike. After the police firing at Sewri on 23, the strike rapidly spread and by 26 "every mill in Bombay City with the exception of two mills at Colaba were compelled to close their gates".<sup>105</sup>

As soon as the general strike was complete negotiations to form a joint strike leadership, which had already begun, were seriously taken up by the participating unions. While this was going on the May Day approached. It is on record in the minutes of the executive of the WPP, Bombay, that the party had decided to celebrate the May Day with the cooperation of all the unions and likeminded parties. Later they decided to prepare a manifesto addressed to mill workers engaged in general strike explaining strike strategy to be distributed on May Day.<sup>106</sup> It is significant that a month in advance of May Day, N. M. Joshi, general secretary of the AITUC, had issued a circular to all provincial committees and affiliated unions to celebrate May Day.<sup>107</sup> Jhabvala in his defence statement in the Meerut case re-

104. Meerut Record, Bradley's statement, P 691.

105. *Labour Gazette*, Vol 8, September 1928 to August 1929, p 146.

106. Meerut Record, P 1344.

107. *Ibid*, D 190(42).

cords that on May Day 1928 in Bombay there was a "monster May Day Demonstration" in which "the moderate BTLU, the Seamen's Union and some others participated officially."<sup>108</sup> Prosecution witness (PW 147) in the same case had deposed that there were four May Day meetings in different parts of Bombay. The meeting in the textile area (Parel) was presided over by Jhabwala and was addressed by Alve, Dange, Bradley, Joglekar and Nimbkar. This May Day was also celebrated in meetings and demonstrations in Calcutta,<sup>109</sup> Lahore, Amritsar<sup>110</sup> and Madras.

Coming to the formation of the joint strike committee let it be recorded that the BTLU had appointed a strike committee consisting of its working committee. The GKM had formed a broader strike committee with Alve and Kasle, who were themselves textile workers. Jhabwala, with his Mill Workers Union, had also a strike committee. Negotiations which began in the last week of April between these unions resulted in a joint strike committee in which 15 members were from the BTLU and 15 from GKM and Jhabwala's union. There was no chairman of the joint strike committee, R. S. Nimbkar and Syed Munawar were elected secretaries and S. V. Parulekar and B. F. Bradley, treasurers. Other important members of the committee were N. M. Joshi, R. S. Asavle, F. J. Ginwala, S. A. Dange and S. S. Mirajkar. This joint strike committee began to function from 2 May 1928 and drew up a charter of demands of the workers on strike and submitted it to the Millowners Association on the next day.<sup>111</sup>

As Dange records these 17 demands had been submitted to the millowners in one form or other in the previous strikes. In the main they firmly expressed the opposition of the workers to the new system which the millowners were trying to introduce by which every mill worker in

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108. *Ibid*, Jhabwala's statement, P 2425.

109. *Ibid*, P 2172.

110. *Ibid*, P 1879.

111. For full text of the charter see *Labour Gazette*, October 1928, p 149.



the weaving section had to mind three looms instead of two and in the spinning section two sides of the spinning frame instead of one. They opposed the new system of piece-rate wages in the weaving section which amounted to a 12½ per cent wagecut and the increased hours of work to 10 hours a day on the same wages. One of the demands said that workers who were getting a wage of less than Rs 30 per month should get a "substantial rise". This amounted to a demand, though not very clearly put, for fixing a minimum wage in the textile industry.

It is interesting to note that one of the demands of the strikers was: "(16) Employment in the weaving department of the mills should be opened to the members of the so-called *depressed classes*." Abolition of discrimination based on caste was a demand of a section of backward workers, because when in the course of working in the loom, if the thread were to break, the spindle had to be sucked by the mouth to pull out the thread for tying. The millowners in their reply said that the discrimination was a result of the attitude of the workers themselves to this question and they did not want to interfere. Employers were thus clearly using the backward sentiments of a section of the workers to divide the workers, while the joint strike committee, correctly fighting against this discrimination, was trying to unite them as a class, irrespective of caste distinction.

In their answer to the charter of demands the millowners reiterated their decision of introducing the new system, while maintaining the status quo on other matters. As for negotiations they agreed to negotiate only with the registered unions. At that time only the BTLU was a registered union. The GKM was not yet registered. Mayekar, who was still its general secretary, though under attack by the managing committee for mismanagement and an inquiry was proceeding in the middle of May, took the initiative to register the union. He did this without the sanction or knowledge of the managing committee. The government labour office gave him the registration and the union came to know of it when it was published

in the press. Meanwhile Alve, as the president of the union, in consultation with other members and the WPP, had also applied for registration with the full knowledge that the majority of the managing committee and the membership of the GKM was fully backing him. As the union by the name GKM had already been registered, Alve applied for registration under the name 'Girni Kamgar Union'.<sup>112</sup> Thus the GKU was registered on 23 May 1928 according to the minutes seized by the police at the time of the arrests of the Meerut conspiracy case and later produced as a prosecution exhibit.<sup>113</sup> The office-bearers elected at the meeting at Nagu Sayaji Wadi on 22 May are recorded in the second page of the minutes. They are: president—A. A. Alve; general secretary—S. A. Dange; secretaries—Satum, Tawde and Joglekar; vice-presidents—Jhabwala, Bradley, Nimbkar and Tamhankar; treasurers—B. T. Alve and Ghate; members: Kasle, Mirajkar and others.

Dange explains why the clause in the constitution of GKM that non-workers (ie outsiders) could not be elected to the managing committee of the union was not adopted in the constitution of the newly-formed GKU with the consent of the union members. This enabled the WPP leaders to get elected to the managing committee. In the early stages of the trade-union movement this strengthened the militant section of the working class to counteract the reformist trend dominant in the trade-union movement at that time.

It is interesting to note here that the starting of such a big general strike of 1½ lakh workers of Bombay immediately attracted the attention of the international workingclass organisations and token aid began to pour in from them as an expression of their solidarity with the Indian workers. First to react in this way was the Textile Workers Union of USSR which dispatched by cable a sum of Rs 20916-12-00 to S. S. Jhabwala, the then vice-

112. *Labour Gazette*, October 1928, p 157.

113. Meerut Record, P 958.

president of the Textile Labour Union on 28 April 1928. The instruction for this payment was received by a Bombay bank on 30 April 1928. But this bank (the National City Bank of New York), strangely enough, reported about the receipt of money to the government authorities and enquired whether the payment should be made to Jhabwala. The government was unwilling to allow the payment made to Jhabwala, perhaps because he was a WPP member, and the bank obtained fresh instruction from the sender to make the payment to N. M. Joshi. This is proved by the then secret and confidential correspondence, which is now available in the home department files in the Maharashtra State Archives.<sup>114</sup> Petigara, the commissioner of police of Bombay, wrote to the secretary, government of Bombay, home department, on 30 April 1928: "The National City Bank of New York has received instructions to pay Mr Jhabwala, vice-president of the Bombay Textile Labour Union dollars 7690, ie about Rs 20,000. The money is probably received from Moscow through a German bank—kindly obtain orders whether the payment should be allowed. Reply requested by wire or phone." In a subsequent note in the same file it is recorded that the "remittance from Voronoff, Moscow, to the Bombay Textile Union" could not be withheld. The same file records a letter from Voronoff, secretary, Textile Workers Union of USSR, to N. M. Joshi which states:

"Dear Comrade,

"Your letter of May 25th received. We thank you for the information. Evidently you have not received the telegram sent simultaneously with the money, in which we stated that the money was sent by the Textile Workers Union of the USSR in support of the striking workers of Bombay.

"We are informed from the Indian Press that the striking workers are starving, and we are very pleased if

114. Maharashtra State Archives, Home Department, Special Branch, Bombay, File No 543(18)E of 1928.

the money sent by us will in the least relieve the onerous position of our heroically fighting brothers.

“We would request you to transmit to the strikers our heartfelt wishes for success and our readiness in the future again, as far as possible, to help them in their struggle for improving their conditions of labour.

“With greetings of proletarian solidarity.”

After the great textile strike involving 1,50,000 workers had gone on for over a month the situation was as follows: (1) the millowners flatly refused to concede the demands of the joint strike committee and they were insistent on implementing the rationalisation scheme, imposing a 20 per cent wagecut and retrenchment. (2) It was clear to the joint strike committee that the workers had to be ready for a prolonged strike. (3) The funds in the hands of the committee at the time, including the balance of the funds collected for the earlier strikes and the first instalment of the relief fund sent by the textile workers of the USSR mentioned above, was over Rs 30,000. (4) The sum was obviously insufficient for organising any adequate relief to the strikers after meeting the essential expenses for the organisation of the strike battle.

Taking these factors into account the joint strike committee decided to advise the workers to leave for their village homes in Konkan region. Dange describes how the joint strike committee made arrangements with the Indian-owned cooperative steam navigation company to charter ships for the transport of the striking workers to their homes.

Workers took their April wages on 7 May. They had no other resources to fall back upon, except some relief from the fund of the joint strike committee, which as we have seen, was totally inadequate. In this situation workers accepted the advice of the joint strike committee and their exodus began by the end of May. According to one estimate two-thirds of the striking workers left for their village homes. According to Dange about 80 thousand workers left for their homes. The exodus continued in

the succeeding months. *Kranti* dated 17 August 1928 records that relief operation began on 12 June 1928. It shows that every action of the striking workers was taking an organised form. In the following months more money was received from the international workingclass organisations. Efforts were also made to get grants from the Bombay Municipal Corporation and from the Bombay provincial congress committee, and Dange describes with what results. Other Indian trade unions also contributed to the strike fund and collections were also made from citizens and workers from Bombay, Ahmedabad and Poona. Dange also gives the salient points of the balancesheet of the joint strike committee for the period from 7 May 1928 to 31 January 1929 (see Document 24). Dange points out that of the total collection of more than Rs 1,10,000, Rs 82,238-5-5 was the contribution from the international workingclass organisations; Rs 39,165-4-9 was the contribution from "red" unions, ie the unions affiliated to Red International of Labour Unions (RILU) and Rs 43,073-0-8 from "yellow" unions, ie unions affiliated to International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU). The "red" organisations mentioned by Dange can be identified from the balancesheet as (1) the Textile Workers' Union of USSR (affiliated to RILU) which is responsible for 2 instalments, (2) Workers Welfare League of India in England, which later, the prosecution in Meerut case claimed as being "communist dominated". The "yellows" can be identified as the International Federation of Textile Workers Associations and the British Trades Union Congress. The balancesheet is reproduced on next page.<sup>115</sup>

## THE JOINT STRIKE COMMITTEE

Statement of Receipts and Expenditure from  
7 May 1928 to 31 January 1929

## RECEIPTS

*Foreign Contributions:*

	Rs As Ps
Bombay Labour Organisation Fund (Balance of the fund for 1925 strike)	4,900-00-00
Bombay Labour Relief and Organisation Fund (Balance of the fund from 1925 strike)	12,760-11-00
Russian workers' contribution through Bombay T. Labour Union (Voronoff)	20,416-12-09
Russian workers' contribution through Mr Jhabwala	
International Federation of Textile Workers Association sent by Hon. T. Shaw, through Mr N. M. Joshi	25,405-05-08
Workers' Welfare League, London Through Mr Bradley Rs 4,015-5-0 Through Mr Joshi handed over by Mr Bharucha Rs 653-3-0	4,668-08-00
Collection received by the British Trades Union Congress sent to Mr Joshi	7-00-00
<b>Total</b>	<b>82,238-05-05</b>

*Inland Contribution:*

Collections made by the deputation of the committee at Ahmedabad mills	5,863-06-03
Bombay Textile Labour Union Rs 2,000-0-0	
Donation for the Enquiry Committee Expenses Rs 200-0-0	2,200-00-00
Bombay Provincial Congress Committee	5,000-00-00
GIP Railway Workmen's Union, Bombay	1,355-11-06

	Rs As Ps
Nagpur Textile Labour Union (including collection)	225-00-00
Miscellaneous collections and contributions including the money received from the Citizen's Textile Workers' Strike Relief Committee, Bombay	11,739-04-06
<b>Total</b>	<b>26,383-06-03</b>
Steamer and railway tickets refund	842-11-09
Empty bags sale	2,062-09-06
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1,11,527-00-11</b>

## EXPENDITURE

Volunteers' expenses	5,051-00-06
Printing charges	1,452-13-00
Conveyance charges	1,965-05-09
Legal assistance	699-08-00
Postage and telegrams	214-02-06
Rent expenses	727-01-00
Salaries	1,202-00-00
Stationery expenses	38-08-00
Deputation expenses	640-02-00
Miscellaneous expenses	801-03-00
Steamer and railway tickets	3,310-02-03
Relief expenses (rice and dal)	94,657-01-09
Strike Enquiry Committee expenses	448-13-06
Suspense	296-11-00
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,11,504-08-03</b>
<b>Balance</b>	<b>22-08-08</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1,11,527-00-11</b>

Rs As Ps

*Details of Balance*

In the Imperial Bank of India Current Account	18-06-07
Cash in hand	4-02-01
Total	22-08-08

Dange records that the Bombay Municipal Corporation, then dominated by the national bourgeoisie, rejected a nonofficial motion to sanction Rs 1,00,000 for the relief of the striking textile workers. The Bombay provincial congress committee, whose leading office-bearers then were members of the WPP, granted Rs 5000. After stating those facts Dange makes the following trenchant observation:<sup>116</sup>

“It is only the international working class that sincerely helped the Bombay workers. The Russian, British, German and other workers in the foreign countries and Indian workers at home together gave 94 per cent of the total relief money for their comrade strikers. It was this solid objective experience that taught workers slogan: Workers of the World Unite!”

Big noise was made in the press about “tons of foreign money” received for the relief of the strikers. How totally inadequate was the Rs 95,000 spent on the relief of “30,000 workers” for about “114 days” is proved by Dange by presenting the following calculation.

“The round sum of Rs 95,000 spent on corn relief gives Rs 833 per day, whereas the wage of the textile workers per day which they had ceased receiving amounted to Rs 2,00,000. The relief distributed over all the workers comes to 248th part of their wages. These ‘tons of foreign money’ against which the government and the bourgeoisie shrieked do not give more than 1 pie [per day] to each worker who earned Rs 1-6-0 per day on an average... Even supposing that the whole money was spent on the 30,000 strik-

116. Meerut Record, Dange’s statement, P 2497.



ers only, who came to receive relief and were the neediest of all the workers, they received only a 38th part or pies 5 per head per day."

Thus, Dange defends the right of Indian workers to receive fraternal help from the revolutionary section of the international working class, which was under particular attack from the Indian bourgeoisie and a section of the reformist labour leadership. For instance, it is on record that B. Shiva Rao openly condemned the joint strike committee for receiving "Russian money". Dange further points out that the entire money required for the actual organisation of the strike came from inside the country. It is interesting to note that while the Bombay provincial congress committee, as stated earlier, paid Rs 5000, the Bombay Municipal Corporation rejected the nonofficial motion to grant Rs 1,00,000 in aid of the Bombay textile workers on strike. Dange records that efforts to get Gandhiji's support to collect money from Ahmedabad in aid of the strikers ended in a failure: "... In Ahmedabad they met Mahatma Gandhi personally and requested him to render help through his union. His first and foremost statement was 'I am not convinced that the workers are in the right. How can I help them?' That revealed the bourgeois in him. He did not begin by doubting the bourgeoisie. But he started with the assumption that the workers were wrong and that is what the bourgeois does. Our delegation left him to his prayer and his millowners and went straight over his head to the workers in Ahmedabad directly. They collected there Rs 5863-6-3."

Bradley, in his article, describes how in the strike the workers established their right of picketing at the gates of the mills and factories on strike. In the beginning the police attempted to prevent picketing and, as Bradley says, the police commissioner said he would not allow any picketing. But hundreds of workers came forward to stand in the picket line at the millgate and ready to get arrested if it came to that. It is on record in the minutes of WPP (dated 6 May 1928) that it was decided that Mirajkar would undertake to lead a picket party as a test case and offer him-

self for arrest. In this situation the police commissioner had to relent. Even thereafter, as Bradley points out, the police were still carrying on a reign of terror and picketers were being arrested or beaten. In this connection Bradley also records how Dange was arrested on 1 June for "intimidating and wrongfully confining" two blacklegs whom the picketers allegedly caught hold of and brought to Dange in a meeting. A complaint was filed by the blackleg under pressure from the police which fell through as the alleged complainants ultimately refused to carry it through. Thereafter, peaceful picketing continued at all the millgates in which women workers also participated.

Peaceful picketing at the millgates and strikers' mass meetings, in the mornings and evenings at key points in the mill area, were important forms of organisation which played a role in conducting the strike. But, in both the cases workers had to meet and defeat the attacks and repression by the police. As in the case of picketing the police tried to attack the strikers' meeting under various subterfuges. These meetings had become a regular feature. Press reporters of leading dailies attended the meetings, some of whom were later exposed as CID men. Bradley records how two CID reporters attending strikers' meetings in the early days were driven away by the workers and how they rushed to the nearest telephone and called mounted police. Workers were not terrorised by such show of force and established their right to hold these regular daily mass meetings which became an important organising forum—a daily link between the militant leadership of the joint strike committee and the mass of striking workers. The main centre where most of these meetings took place was an open space in Nagu Sayaji Wadi, Delisle Road. Parel (Damodar Thackersey Hall) and Sewri also figured as other centres of these meetings.

At these meetings the WPP leaders reported to the workers about the day-to-day development in the strike, about the tactics of the millowners and government and police, and about the negotiations as and when they took place. Above all, these meetings became a powerful tool of political

education of the workers. These prepared the ground for building the militant Girni Kamgar Union and a mass base for the Workers and Peasants Party in Bombay. That is why these meetings were often a target of police or CID provocation and attack.

Dange records in the course of his statement in the Meerut case that railway workers holding their union meeting on 4 July at Damodar Thackersey Hall drove away CID reporters who insisted on their right to be present in the meeting and refused to leave even when told to do so. This incident later led to the arrest of R. S. Nimbkar on the charge of "an assault on a public servant". After a few days when he was produced before the magistrate's court in Parel a large crowd of strikers surrounded the court. The contemporary press reported that police lathicharged the strikers, with the result that "about 25 were injured and 4 arrested".<sup>117</sup> The magistrate discharged Nimbkar saying that it was a technical offence, imposing a fine of Rs 50.

A large number of shorthand reports of the strike speeches made by the police reporters were produced later as prosecution exhibits in the Meerut conspiracy case. We get an idea of the political contents of these speeches from the defence statement of S. S. Mirajkar.

For instance, in one of his speeches Mirajkar referring to the reports brought by the workers about "police entering some of the chawls and beating the innocent workers" told the workers that they have to conduct the strike in a peaceful and united manner but they should not be intimidated by police provocation. It is the right of the workers to resort to strike when the conditions of wages and work are imposed upon them which make their living condition unbearable. Police beating the workers in their homes is an illegal act and had to be resisted. Mirajkar defending this advice to the workers said in his defence statement "I certainly have to say that we did advise the workers to beat the police if they were to enter private premises of the

workers and beat them. During the strike such kind of police activity was a common occurrence and therefore this advice was essential and it controlled the police beating and such other highhandedness on their part." An Anglo-Indian subinspector, Long, was particularly notorious in leading such beatings. Mirajkar records: "There was one police officer, Mr Long, who was always in the habit of entering these workers' chawls and beating the poor workers. But when the workers knew what their rights and privileges were while dealing with the police Mr Long's activities ceased, so much so that Mr Long left the workers' area by resigning his job."<sup>118</sup>

In another speech Mirajkar advised the workers that whenever they go to their villages they must report to the peasants in their villages about the experience of the long-drawn strike and the organisation they are building to fight the same. They should tell the peasants that like the workers who are oppressed and exploited by the capitalists the peasants too are exploited by "the government, by the officials, by the police, by the *sahukars*, by the *khots*, who form a complete gang of exploiters of the peasantry in the countryside". He also advised them to "form village committees of the poorer section of peasantry who would carry on the program of the peasant struggle".<sup>119</sup>

In another speech he explained that the basic demands of the workers and peasants will not be fully realised until complete independence is achieved and takes the form of a workers and peasants raj. To achieve this objective the workers have to conduct many strikes like the one in Bombay and peasants' struggle in the villages and build worker-peasant unity to coordinate these struggles and develop them as a part of the national struggle for independence.<sup>120</sup>

In explaining this point he as well as other speakers referred to the October socialist revolution in Russia and the achievements of the workers and peasants raj established

118. Meerut Record, Mirajkar's statement, P 1455.

119. Ibid, P 1457.

120. Ibid, P 1454.

there. This general political content of the numerous speeches in the strikers' meeting in the course of the six months could be reproduced because a large number of reports of Mirajkar's speeches were put as prosecution evidence in the Meerut case and Mirajkar in his defence statement frankly explained exactly what he said in those speeches repudiating the distortions made by the reporters and the translators.

It is necessary here to record the progress of the strike from June to 5 October and the various stages of negotiations during this period which led finally to the calling off of the strike with the agreement on the appointment of the Fawcett inquiry committee. This will bring out the obduracy of the millowners at every stage and how the magnificent unity of the strikers and their militant actions finally forced them to agree to the concessions leading to the calling off of the strike.

Bradley in his article (Document 25) makes a brief reference to the course of negotiations; but Dange in his Meerut statement gives a lengthy account of the twists and turns in the negotiation.

Actual negotiations began only when the Millowners Association agreed to negotiate with the representatives of the joint strike committee, giving up their earlier stand that they would only negotiate with the registered unions. For this purpose it was agreed that small subcommittees be appointed by the MOA and the joint strike committee. The subcommittee on behalf of the joint strike committee consisted among others of N. M. Joshi and F. J. Ginzala, general secretary and president of the BTLU, S. A. Dange and A. A. Alve, general secretary and president of GKU, and Jhabwala, president of the Bombay Mill Workers' Union. These negotiations began on 9 June 1928 and continued in several sessions up to 26, when they ended in a failure. The millowners insisted on their standardisation scheme of wages. They claimed that there was no proposal of a cut in wages in the spinning section, on the other hand they claimed that there were increases. In their scheme of wages for the weaving section, which they put forward a

little later, they emphatically claimed there were no proposal of any cut. Dange in his statement rebutted this stating:

“The millowners wanted to fool us into believing this because they knew that there was no textile expert amongst us who could analyse the scheme and expose the wagecut hidden in the complicated technique of that scheme... Though at the beginning we could not find where and how the wagecut was hidden, yet our class outlook and the understanding of the capitalist system had convinced us that the millowners would not undertake such a trouble unless they profited by it.”<sup>121</sup> Dange explains how he arrived at the average wagecut of the workers of the weaving section as well as the total number of workers to be retrenched in the millowners’ scheme by holding detailed talks with leading workers of different mills. The information which he thus laboriously collected led him to the conclusion that the wagecut must be at least 20 per cent if not more and that the proposed standardisation scheme would render at least 10,000 workers jobless. The millowners were reluctant to reveal at this stage the exact amount of the wagecut in the weaving section and total retrenchment their scheme would involve since their standardisation scheme was not yet finalised because of their internal differences. Dange, on the other hand, as a result of consultation with workers from different groups of mills was in a better position to assess the amount of wagecut and retrenchment involved. He says: “I would consult the workers in each and every mill about their actual earnings, output, the nature of production, the state of machinery and the composition of materials. This information could not be available to the millowners because of their internal competition. Each millowner was the competitor of the other though for the purpose of the strike all were united. And none of them would allow the other to consult his costing sheets and lay-out on the ground of trade secrets. When the millowners were given the challenge to prove that our statement was not correct, they gave up the talk of further negotiations or

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121. S. A. Dange, *Selected Works*, Vol 3, p 92.

amending the scheme. The negotiations fell through on 26 June."<sup>122</sup>

After the failure of the negotiations the millowners started a concerted offensive to break the strike. For this purpose they finalised their standardisation schemes amongst themselves and posted notices at millgates in Marathi to explain to the workers their new scheme of rates and wages and the standing orders on 3 July. These notices contained detailed of wagecuts for different departments and categories of workers and stated that the workers were free to rejoin their work by accepting the revised wage rates and orders. Their idea was to trick and divide the workers by showing that in certain categories slightly increased wage rates were being offered. They expected that a section of the workers would swallow the bait and be prepared to rejoin work. For this purpose they decided to proceed further cautiously. Thus on 26 July the millowners planned to "re-open the mills gradually in areas starting with 8 mills in Jacob Circle on 6 August 1928 and opening 8 to 10 mills every other day so that by 20 August all the mills would be opened".<sup>123</sup> For this purpose the millowners on 6 August with the help of the government arranged to post, as Dange puts it, "50 mounted police, 50 armed police and 200 ordinary police" to terrorise the strikers. Dange further says, "but to the discomfiture of the bourgeoisie and the government, not a single worker turned up... After a trial of 8 days the millowners decided to give up the show."<sup>124</sup> In defeating this attempt of the millowners, intensified picketing by the strikers, in which the members of the joint strike committee themselves participated, played an important role. The picketers used to take up their position at the millgates at four in the morning when the armed police turned up.

This fiasco of the combined efforts of the millowners and

122. Ibid, p 93.

123. *Labour Gazette*, September 1928 to August 1929, p 163.

124. Dange, *Selected Works*, Vol 3, p 97.

the authorities to break the strike by show of force compelled them to open a new round of negotiations.

At the initiative of the general member of the Bombay government a conference of the representatives of the mill-owners and the joint strike committee was convened on 15 and 16 August to consider the question of appointing a conciliation or inquiry committee for settlement of the strike. At this conference the millowners insisted that the workers should accept their scheme of "standardisation of rates and wages" and withdraw the strike during pendency of the inquiry. The representatives of the joint strike committee consulted the general body of the strike committee which decided "against calling off of the strike during the inquiry period unless the wagecut and 1925 conditions were restored. Next day, 16 August, this was communicated to the conference. The millowners then withdrew their consent to an inquiry or conciliation committee."<sup>125</sup>

Dange further exposes the game of the millowners and points out their obstinacy in insisting in the strike being withdrawn and their refusal to suspend the application of the new scheme during the pendency of the inquiry. Dange trenchantly summarises the result of the conclusion of the strike in the following words: "There was no reason for the millowners to reject our proposals except that they still hoped to smash the strike by prolonging it. The communists did not stand to gain by prolongation. The millowners accepted in the October settlement almost in toto what we had proposed at the August conference. Even if they had accepted our alternative proposal for the committee to work and the strike to continue, the results would have been the same as they were afterwards, except perhaps in the matter of the verdict of the committee."<sup>126</sup>

As stated earlier the executive committee of the Workers and Peasants Party, Bombay, was closely following the development of the textile strike and taking collectively general decisions whenever problems arose of negotia-

125. *Ibid*, p 100.

126. *Ibid*, p 101.



tions when they began. When the millowners, as stated above, decided on a concerted effort to reopen the mills on the basis of their abovementioned scheme of standardisation of rates and wages and standing orders, the WPP executive decided to intensify the picketing and defeat this attempt of the millowners.<sup>127</sup>

In the course of negotiations when the question of conciliation or inquiry committee arose, the WPP discussed it and took a principled position and decided "... the executive committee was against any arbitration board for the settlement of the strike, but they had no objection to a court of inquiry, if any was suggested".<sup>128</sup> Actually, this was the position taken by the whole joint strike committee during the negotiations.

As stated by Dange, since the millowners were not prepared to submit the scheme to an inquiry committee and were not prepared to refrain from applying the same and restoring the present wages in the August conference, the strike could not be resolved and its prolongation was due to the obstinacy of the millowners.

After these rounds of negotiations had failed on 16 August and the strike had gone on for full five months, there appeared a division among the millowners—the weaker section among them wanted the strike to be settled as soon as possible. The mayor of the Municipal Corporation, probably inspired by some of the millowners, took the initiative to bring the two parties together and several conferences took place between representatives of the millowners and N. M. Joshi and S. A. Dange on behalf of the strike committee. In these conferences proposals were made both by the joint strike committee and by the mayor. Some of the mayor's proposals were acceptable to the strike committee but the millowners were not prepared to accept any of those.

The proposals made by Seth Mangaldas and through

127. Meerut Record, WPP Minutes, P 1344.

128. Ibid.

Madhavji Dharamsi Mills also show that differences were coming up amongst the millowners. Both these negotiations failed. One of these groups led Seth Mangaldas representing 20 mills even posed that they were against the "standardisation scheme". But further questioning and inquiry by Dange revealed that this group was already paying lower wages than others. That is why they were opposed to standardisation of wages—ie equal wages for the same work in all mills—which would make them pay more wages than before. They were not opposed to the wagecut which the new scheme involved under the plea of "the plight of the industry".<sup>129</sup>

After the failure of the 16 August negotiation the strike continued. The WPP leaders, assessing the position realistically, knew that after five months of starvation, the staying power of the workers had reached the limit. At the same time a division was developing among the millowners and a section of them were probing avenues of compromise though the owners of the Sassoon group were adamant and acting as a diehard group among the Millowners Association. This was the situation in the first week of September. Assessing the situation in totality the WPP leaders proceeded to take measures to strengthen the resistance of the striking workers on the one hand and to take a principled position towards the moves of compromise being made by a section of the millowners so as to consistently defend the interests of the workers in the course of the negotiations then proceeding. This is made clear by Dange in his statement. Regarding the staying power of the workers at that time Dange points out: "... the staying power of the strikers did not depend on the sum of money available for relief though it helped the poorest sections to a certain extent. To remain unemployed for a period of five months was not an ordinary test for the fighting workers whose average daily wage had not been more than 20 annas."

Dange explains the position which the militant leadership of striking workers was taking vis-a-vis the compro-

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129. Dange, *Selected Works*, Vol 3, p 122.

mise moves thus: "If we were thinking of compromise we were doing it because at that time it was necessary to save the strike from defeat; a defeat at the stage would have meant the wiping out of the new outlook from the trade-union field before it had struck new roots. It was the first strike that was being carried out consciously on the principles of class struggle and under a revolutionary leadership. If we could secure the demands for the majority of workers but not all the demands of all the workers and if we could not hold out longer it was advantageous to try a compromise, to accept a little retreat in order to advance with double vigour."<sup>130</sup>

The agreement arrived at, as a result of the negotiations, was that the rationalisation scheme involving 12½ per cent wagecut and increased workload was not to be extended to the vast number of mills where it was not in force, pending the report of the inquiry committee. Other issues which were covered by the terms of reference of the inquiry committee were: (1) The standardisation scheme of rates and of standardised muster prepared by the millowners and also the scheme prepared by the joint strike committee. (2) Standing orders of the Millowners Association as amended by them and submitted on 4 October. (3) The 17 demands of the joint strike committee. This agreement was a compromise because it did not say anything about the Sassoon group of mills where the rationalisation scheme had already been applied and was in force. Dange has put it thus: "The millowners agreed to withdraw the wagecuts and retrenchment, ie to give the wages, rates and conditions of work in March 1927 and agreed not to extend their rational system. We, however, did not succeed in overthrowing the rational system from the Sassoon, Finlay and Kohinoor mills, but we succeeded in stopping its extension."<sup>131</sup>

Developments that took place after the settlement of the strike (ie between October 1928 and 20 March 1929) have been described by Dange in his statement in the Meerut

130. *Ibid*, p 124.

131. *Ibid*, p 128.

case in three sections. We are reproducing here two important extracts which summarise in a general manner some of these important developments. It is necessary here to give further facts given by Dange in his full account in order to make these extracts understandable. Immediately after the settlement of the strike the leadership of the joint strike committee had to deal with a difficult situation. Workers of the Sassoon and Finlay mills, 15 in number and employing over 20,000 workers, were in no mood to return to work though the rest of the mills had started work. They rightly felt that they had gained nothing as the new system involving workload and wagecut had been already imposed upon them before the general strike began. Dange records that traditional labour leaders would have run away from this difficult situation but the WPP leaders faced the situation boldly, took an understanding attitude towards the mood of the workers and supported them in their struggle. At the same time they explained to them how they can win their demands only with the support of the rest of the workers and in a joint struggle. A leaflet was issued for this purpose signed by the WPP leaders, as Dange says, to "measure the exact extent of the resistance". Leaders knew that after the six-month-long strike and starvation there was a certain measure of exhaustion among the workers and they needed a respite to prepare for a future united struggle. Prosecution in the Meerut case produced the leaflet and argued that soon after the settlement leaders were calling for another strike. Dange points out that this was not the correct interpretation of the leaflet. "However this handbill does not lend itself to the interpretation of the prosecution. It did not call upon the workers to continue the strike, though we would not have hesitated to do so if necessary." The leaflet put before the workers a concrete proposal of action: "Let us organise two red troops consisting of 500 satyagrahi volunteers and 100 lecturers. And let us start an agitation for collecting Rs 25,000 for grain." The leaflet also called upon the workers: "Those who are prepared to place a stringent boycott on these mills and undergo even imprisonment if occasion

arises and to resort to satyagraha should attend" the meeting called at Poibavdi at 4 p.m. The campaign continued among the Sassoon mill workers for about four days (7 to 11 October) after which the agreement "had been accepted on all sides and accepted with thorough understanding". The *Labour Gazette*, referring to this workers' strike of the Sassoon and Finlay mills, records: "But on better counsel prevailing the workers attended at all the mills on the 11th."

The Girni Kamgar Union, which acted as a major part of the joint strike committee, began to function as an independent trade union only after the settlement of the strike. The militant leadership of the strike gave a call to strengthen the organisation of the GKU in a leaflet issued by them on 12 October 1928.<sup>132</sup> The leaflet told the workers that the strike "has been suspended" and the millowners would again attack the workers. Therefore, the workers should prepare themselves to meet the offensive by taking the following steps: (1) One lakh members should be enlisted in the Girni Kamgar Union, (2) enlistment of 5000 worker-volunteers, one thousand worker-speakers and (3) collection of Rs 2 lakh strike fund. This was the first leaflet which called upon the workers to organise a strong Girni Kamgar Union in order to prepare themselves for the new struggle. The leaflet was signed by B. F. Bradley, A. A. Alve, K. N. Joglekar, G. R. Kasle, S. A. Dange, R. S. Nimbkar, S. S. Mirajkar and Gadkari. The campaign for enrolling membership of the union from October 1928 to January 1929 was responded by workers by a remarkable upsurge of union consciousness which was never seen. In December 1928 the present writer has seen long queues of workers standing on the road on which the head office of the GKU was situated. Workers were paying four-anna membership subscription as well as one rupee strike fund. These were two different receipts and both of them had the red flag printed on them which was referred to as "our symbol" in the leaflet. This upsurge of union consciousness

132. Meerut Record, P 967-T.

is recorded in the figures of subscription collections made by the GKU from October 1928 to March 1929. Dange in his statement gives the following figures:<sup>133</sup>

October 1928	Rs 6,794-00-00
November 1928	Rs 12,283-00-00
December 1928	Rs 15,135-04-06
January 1929	Rs 31,100-12-00
February 1929	Rs 16,555-04-06
March 1929	Rs 12,505-15-06
<b>Total</b>	<b>Rs 94,374-04-06</b>

These figures of union subscription and strike fund collections correspond to an average membership enrolment for each month recorded and the highest peak of over one lakh membership which was reached in January 1929. Dange has explained this in detail in the part of his statement reproduced here. In estimating the membership of the GKU Dange had not before him the tally of the receipt books. But he had to base his calculations from the subscription received from workers as recorded in the account books seized from the union office by the police when they raided the same for the arrests of the leaders in connection with the Meerut conspiracy case. The membership of the GKU (as calculated from the amount received) in December was over 61,000 and was accepted by the labour office of the Bombay government. The *Labour Gazette* of January 1929 says: "At the moment of writing the membership of this union [ie GKU] is reported to have increased to 65,000." According to Dange the figure of membership reached "the highest, over 1,00,000 in January 1929" This is proved by the steep rise in the collection in January.

Soon after all the mills began to work in full complement by the third week on October, the millowners opened their offensive by resorting to violation of the agreement of 4 October 1928. This was immediately resisted by workers by resorting to individual strikes in different mills. There

were 71 such strikes from October 1928 to March 1929. These were led by militant workingclass leaders who had come forward during the six months of the general strike. They had gained experience and education during the course of the struggle by organising volunteers, picketing and by attending the daily strike meetings which were veritable schools of class consciousness and politics. These leading groups of workers of individual mills organised the strikes in their own mills and approached the leadership of the GKU which had now begun to function as the central leadership of the textile workers. This spontaneous organisational upsurge gave birth to millwise organisation which were the embryonic forms of mill committees, and which were recognised as such by the union leadership later and gave it the organised form as constituent of the GKU. This has been described by Dange in the following words:

“These 71 strikes were completely initiated and conducted by the workers themselves. During this phase of the struggle, the whole rank-and-file was drawn into the direct conduct of the strikes for which a new type of a live and flexible organisation was born. It was the mill committees and rank-and-file departmental leaders.”

*Kranti*, the organ of the WPP, which was restarted on 30 June 1928, first appeared as a weekly and later as biweekly right up to third week of March 1929, when the editor and the other leaders were arrested in the Meerut case, played an important role in the great textile strike and its aftermath. Particularly, after the strike ended and the GKU started functioning as a mass trade union the circulation of the paper substantially increased as it was giving detailed news and instructions and guiding the workers in the tasks of their organisation. *Kranti* took note of the emergence of the militant leadership of workers in every mill. Its issue of 9 December 1928 published a note entitled “Instructions to Mill Committees”. It called upon the mill committees elected at general body meetings of workers in several mills to elect a “president, vice-president, treasurer and secretary to conduct the work of the mill com-

mittee". This confirms of the minutes stated above. *Kranti* of 6 January 1929 reported that mill committees had been elected in almost every mill.

Dange says that these committees "were not strictly created by regular elections". In this connection it is interesting to note that the Meerut case prosecution record contains documents purporting to be minutes of several meetings of the workers of at least eight mills at which mill committees and their office-bearers were elected. These were: Kohinoor No. 1 and No. 2; Kasturchand Nos. 1, 2 & 3; Tata Mills; Sorab Mill; Goldmohur Mill.<sup>134</sup> This handwritten minute-book in Marathi was seized by the police from the GKU centre at Naigaum where all the above-mentioned mills were situated.<sup>135</sup> This minute book further records that most of these general body meetings of the abovementioned mills were held in the open spaces near the Naigaum centre on various dates between 17 November to 5 December 1928. Attendance at these meetings is recorded to be 1000 to 2000 for each meeting. It appears that office-bearers, ie presidents, vice-presidents and secretaries were elected at the meetings of the mill committees.

Dange describes the leading role and initiative displayed by the mill committees and the office-bearers in conducting individual strikes between October 1928 and March 1929. Dange further describes that the mill committee leadership displayed skill in technical management often superior to the corrupt technical managers appointed by the millowners. The biggest complaint of the millowners, he points out, was that the mill committees were becoming parallel organs of control.

Functions that the mill committees performed enabled the militant GKU to have a powerful rank-and-file base at the mill level. It represented a higher form of militant trade-union organisation which increased its fighting strength and mass basis. That is exactly why the mill committees became the targets of repression both

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134. Meerut Record, P 791-T.

135. Ibid, P 789-Search List.



by the government and the millowners. The Meerut conspiracy case was not only a strike-breaking offensive, as Spratt said, but in the main an offensive to smash the militant trade-union organisations. Almost simultaneously with the Meerut case arrests the government and the millowners launched fierce repression against the 1929 mill strike, the main target was to smash the mill committees. The Pearson court of inquiry appointed after the 1929 strike admits: "The interference by the members of the mill committees with the management was subversive of discipline, and the lightning strikes which were brought about by these members were not such as could be tolerated by the millowners."<sup>136</sup>

#### EAST INDIA RAILWAY STRIKE—LILOOAH

The EIR strike involving 14,000 workers of Lilloah workshop is described by Dharani Goswami as one of the important strikes of the strike wave of 1928. Document 26 is a brief account by Dharani Goswami and Document 27, a critical review from the pen of Philip Spratt. The former is a part of Dharani Goswami's statement in the Meerut case and the latter is a typed article<sup>136a</sup> found amongst the papers of the WPP, Bengal, at the time of the search in connection with the Meerut conspiracy case and identified as a review by Spratt in the statement of Shibnath Banerjee. The other source material, apart from Banerjee's statement, is a detailed review of the strike by K. N. Joglekar which is a part of his statement in the Meerut case. Joglekar was not actually a participant in this strike but was working amongst the railway workers on behalf of the WPP. He was an office-bearer of the GIP Railway Workers Union and as such a member of the All India Railwaymen's Federation. According to Joglekar, the EIR Workers Union came into existence towards the end of 1927 when Oudh-

136. Quo'ed by Dange, see *Selected Works*, Vol 3, p 194.

136a. Meerut Record, P 415/15.

Rohilkhand railway merged with the EIR and the trade union in the former railway extended its activities to the EIR. Gopen Chakravarty was present at the workers' meeting when the EIR Workers Union was found at Lilloah and K. C. Mitra was elected the secretary.

Already at that time discontent was growing among the EI railwaymen at the Lilloah workshop about their condition of wages, housing and arbitrary dismissal of workers by the authorities. The initiative to bring this discontent to a head was taken by the workers themselves when on 29 February 1928 they formulated their demands at a meeting of the whole workshop people. The main demands were: the wages of the skilled workers should be raised by 25 per cent and brought to the level of similar workers of Lucknow and Lahore workshops; unskilled workers to get a minimum wage of Rs 30; the two men dismissed on 16 February be reinstated. The meeting resolved that in the event of these demands not being granted they would resort to direct action.

After the rejection of the demands by the authorities, particularly the reinstatement of the two discharged men, the workers resorted to satyagraha inside the workshop to which the authorities replied by declaring a lock-out on 8 March. Thereupon Mitra, the secretary, and D. P. Sinha, the president, of EIR Union met the EIR agent on 12 March to represent the demands of the workers and to effect a settlement. When the rejection of the demands by the agent was reported to the workers on 14, they demanded the strike be extended to the whole line. Meanwhile, K. C. Roy Chowdhury, MLC, advised the workers to give up their demand and come to a compromise. On 17 March a general strike was considered by the workers and they sent an ultimatum to the authorities that if the demands were not granted by 19, the workers would call out the workers of other railway shops and sheds in Howrah. In reply to this ultimatum the railway board firmly rejecting the demands issued a communique on 20 March announcing the government's intention to put into operation the Raven committee scheme of retrenchment. This communique of

the railway board did not satisfy the workers and the strike continued to spread to other railway areas of Howrah.

Mitra, finding that the strike wave was rising, led a demonstration of 10,000 workers to the agent's office on 28 March. The agent unceremoniously rejected the settlement proposed by the union leadership. When this workers' demonstration, angered by the arrogant rejection by the agent, was returning, the Bamangachi firing referred to by Spratt in his article took place. Joglekar in his Meerut case statement describes the firing in the following words:

"On their way back to their respective quarters, the workers' procession was fired upon by the police with a view to terrorise the workers. Two of the workers were killed and several were wounded. But this act of terrorism in no way affected the decision of the workers but to the dismay of the authorities they [the workers] were ever more determined to continue their struggle. The picketing became more vigilant and towards the evening of 28, the day of the shooting, the workers succeeded in paralysing the traffic of the Amta-Howrah Light Railway. With this firing at Bamangachi the strike takes altogether another turn. The determination of the workers was so strong, and their desire for a general strike was so insistent and keen, that it became impossible for K. C. Mitra any more to flout their wishes."

Bamangachi firing was widely reported in the contemporary press. As Joglekar records: "The Bamangachi shooting became really a public scandal and the government came for bitter condemnation in the press and the platform. Mr G. S. Dutt, the district magistrate, who immediately after the shooting held an inquiry into the affair, strongly condemned the police for wanton shooting. He was emphatic in his decision that there was absolutely no necessity for the shooting."<sup>137</sup> In the background of Bamangachi firing and the adamant attitude of the railway administration the correct strategy, as Spratt points out, would have been

137. Ibid, Joglekar's statement, P 1814.

to spread the strike on the line. In fact, as Joglekar points out, the union in its resolution of 11 April had decided to extend the strike throughout the whole EIR line. But this is exactly what K. C. Mitra did not want to do. This is evident from what he wrote in *Weekly Mazdur* of 18 April 1928, the organ of the union run by him:

“After the shooting the workers all over the line became indignant and every moment it was apprehended that there would be a general strike. But the union wanted to proceed cautiously [?] and did not agree to declare a general strike, believing that a propaganda on constitutional lines would be more effective than a general strike in as much as they would get the sympathy of the public as well as the government.”<sup>138</sup>

Mitra implemented this timid tactics, on the one hand, by keeping the strikers busy in route marches through the jute areas or demonstration through the streets of Calcutta for raising funds, and calling in the nationalist leaders to negotiate with the railway agent for a settlement, on the other. When outside leaders were called they insisted that the workers must reduce their demands, the workers resisted this. But this resistance could not be effective as neither was there an elected strike committee nor did the executive of the union draw its leading workers into the leadership of the strike led by K. C. Mitra. Spratt has underlined the absence of the strike committee and the drawing in of the leading workers in the conduct of the strike as a major weakness of Mitra's leadership.

The tempo of the strike continued unabated for two months. In this situation Mitra succeeded in persuading the additional district magistrate to organise a meeting between the railway agent and the workers' representative where the magistrate himself was present. The agent reiterated his adamant position by virtually rejecting the demands. After the failure of this 4 May meeting, another negotiation around 9 May took place on reduced demands as stated

above. After the rejection of even these reduced demands, Mitra in his desperation led the workers to offer satyagraha in law courts and in the city which Spratt has criticised.

The Liloah strike attracted the attention of the international workingclass movement and they sent help to the strikers on the appeal of the railway union. In this connection Muzaffar Ahmad records that a telegram was sent to RILU which is as follows:

“Secretary, Profintern, Moscow—30,000 strikers are out for 51 days, relief urgently needed. Please send through bank to Mitra, secretary, EI Railway Union, Liloah, Bengal. —Mitra, Spratt, Muzaffar.”

The postal authorities refused to transmit the telegram under instruction of the police but the British-owned Calcutta daily *Statesman* printed the telegram as a propaganda against the workers on strike on 1 May 1928. But, this had an opposite effect and Rs 20,000 was received from RILU and other sources.<sup>139</sup>

About this time the workers as well as Mitra approached the WPP to help the strike. And in this situation workers pressured Mitra to spread the strike on the line, a demand which the WPP from the very beginning was putting forward. Even at this late stage workers showed enough tenacity and militant spirit and decided to send propagandists on the line and to other workshops. As a result strikes in Ondal as well as Asansol, around 25 May onwards, took place. This enabled the workers to continue for another six weeks. At this stage the railway authorities in order to disrupt the strike opened the workshop and asked workers to resume work. It was a move to create division amongst the workers. They foiled the move by entering the workshop and refusing to work. This action of the workshopmen and the spreading of the strike to Ondal and Asansol created a situation in which Mitra issued an appeal to all EIR workers to go on strike all along the line. Workers with the union posters went on the line spreading the message

139. Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and the Communist Party of India*, Vol 2 (Bengali), p 16.

of general strike. The *Statesman*, 5 June 1928, printed the appeal and excerpts from it are given below:

“...Government’s attitude should be met by not only remaining firm in the strike but also by extending the strike still further and stopping work on the East India Railway all along the line ... I appeal to the Lilloah strikers to remain firm and I appeal to the East India Railway employees all over the line to follow the example of Ondal and Asansol and help their struggling comrades, and safeguard their own interest.”

When this appeal was published 30,000 workers were on strike. These included not only the 14,000 men of the Lilloah workshop and the few thousands from Ondal and Asansol but also the workers of Burn & Co. and the workers of the Wellington Jute Mill. The Lilloah workers were standing firm in spite the long period of hardship and suffering, as Dharani Goswami points. But on 6 June the Wellington Jute Mill workers withdrew their strike and joined work. The struggle for the just and urgent demands had soon been taken up by the workers of the Bauria Jute Mills in an organised manner, which will be referred to hereafter. The workers of Burn & Co. also withdrew their strike around the second week of June. In this situation there was a certain weakening of the Lilloah strike position and 400 workers rejoined the workshop which had been kept open.

About this time the strike of the Ondal and Asansol workers started weakening and they started going back to work. In this situation Mitra approached the railway agent through the good offices of a liberal minded zamindar, Arunchandra Sinha, to arrive at a honourable settlement. But it failed. On 8 July an accident at Belur station involving Howrah-Gaya Express took place which led to 20 deaths and several injuries. After this accident Mitra was frightened and immediately convened a meeting of the union executive and persuaded it to call off the strike.

Accordingly the strike was withdrawn on 10 July 1928. The workers went back to work with an illusion created by the union leadership that their demands were being con-

sidered by the railway authorities. In view of this the workers went on a deputation to the chief mechanical engineer to enquire about the promise to redress their grievances. In reply on 26 July the authorities posted a notice saying that no such promise had been made. After this incident the workers held a meeting on 29 where they were told by the union leaders that the local railway authorities were holding back the benefits sanctioned by the higher authorities. As a result the workers again collected before the mechanical engineer's office insisting on an immediate reply to their demands. They were told by the local authorities to submit their grievances individually to the employment officer. The men refused and resorted to satyagraha. As a result the authorities turned them out and closed the shops.

After this incident the agent, Colvin, met the railway board and with its consent 54 leading workers were sacked. The previous reply about the demands was reiterated and at the same time two or three lower categories were given minor wage rises in an obvious effort to disrupt the union. The agent also threatened that resorting to satyagraha would lead to summary dismissal and lockout of the workshop. As a result the workers resumed work on 8 August 1928.

K. C. Mitra, in his speech in the strikers' meeting on 9 July, which took the decision to withdraw the strike, struck a pessimistic note. He said: "I cannot advise you to go back on the humiliating terms offered by the agent but you can go back unconditionally, leaving it to the government to consider your cases later."<sup>140</sup>

Dharani Goswami and Spratt, who were participants in the strike on behalf of the WPP, while underlining the failure of the strike and the tremendous suffering which the workers had to undergo in consequence, emphasise the spirit of militancy of the organisation displayed by the workers in the struggle as a positive factor enabling them to go forward in the future.

140. *Statesman*, 10 July 1928.

## STRIKES IN JUTE MILL INDUSTRY

Two major strikes in the jute mill industry, mainly, at Ludlow Jute Mill at Chengail, and the other in the three Fort Gloucester Mills at Bauria lasting for six months (16 July 1928 to 16 January 1929) were part of the great workingclass upsurge of 1928. Apart from being the precursors of the first ever general strike in the jute industry in 1929, these were the strikes in which militant working-class leadership emerged. They were preceded by strikes in 1926 involving some 30,000 workers, but it was in these strikes of 1928 that the jute workers were drawn into militant trade-unionism under the leadership of the WPP. They also attracted the attention of other political circles in the national freedom movement.

Like the great textile strike of Bombay these strikes in the jute industry were the result of the offensive of the millowners who were seeking to maintain the high profits of the war days by wagecut and retrenchment. Radharaman Mitra points out that the jute millowners were introducing a rationalisation system. He says, "This was a scheme of rationalisation adopted by many of the jute mills after the expiry of the period of war boom in order to lower the costs of production by reducing the number of workers by 1/3, and increasing the weekly working hours of each worker from 38 to 54 or 60, without allowing him corresponding increase of wages. Under this scheme the employers stand to gain everything but the workers loose heavily."<sup>141</sup>

The huge profits which the jute millowners were making are sharply pinpointed in the short comment in *Ganavani* of 26 July 1928 (Document 28) on the jute strike situation : "The shareholders of the jute mills made a profit of Rs 600 per year on every Rs 100 investment."

Dharani Goswami in his statement before the Meerut court has quoted published figures (Document 29) of the high profits the jute industry was making in the postwar years. He points out that the British jute millowners paid

141. Meerut Record, Radharaman Mitra's statement, pp 10-11.



dividends to the extent of 300 to 400 per cent. He has described in vivid terms the brutal exploitation of the jute workers from whose blood and sweat these profits were extracted. The average monthly wages of a jute worker for a 54-hour-week came to about Rs 9 to Rs 20 per month, which was considerably lower than what a textile worker of Bombay was earning in the same year. He has also described how the jute workers were suffering at the hands of the corrupt labour contractors who recruited them. Dismissal at will and even corporal punishment were common occurrences. The millowners were also the zamindars of the villages around the mills where miserable howels were built and rented out to the workers. This was another source of exploitation of the workers by the millowners. A dismissed worker was immediately thrown out of his quarters. All these modes of oppression were brought into full play and in the mid and late twenties the jute workers straightened their backs and began to fight against these oppressions and build their trade unions. This we can see clearly in the strikes in Chengail and Bauria mills in 1928.

Dharani Goswami has quoted the figures from report of T. Johnstone and Sime.<sup>141a</sup> This was a printed pamphlet. Kalidas Bhattacharya, one of the organisers of the Bengal Jute Workers Union says in his evidence as a defence witness (dw 16) that T. Johnstone, a Labour MP, and Sime, secretary, Dundee Jute and Flax Workers Union, came to India in October or November 1925 to study the conditions of living and work in the jute mill industry of India. Their pamphlet *Exploitation in India* was published on behalf of their union. The facts given by Dharani Goswami as well as those given in an article by Kalidas Bhattacharya, which has been produced as a defence document,<sup>141b</sup> seem to be from this pamphlet. Kalidas Bhattacharya records that they said that "Conditions of jute workers in India were terrible", and "They asked us to organise the union and make it a very strong union." He also records

141a. Ibid, D65.

141b. Ibid, D59.

that they gave fraternal assistance to the union and also sent money for the Bauria strike.

Thus the struggle of the 10,000 workers of the Ludlow Jute Mill, Chengail, was mainly on the most elementary issue of workers' right to organise their trade union. The first effort to organise a trade union for the 3,50,000 jute mill workers of Bengal was by the members of the WPP who took the initiative to organise the Bengal Jute Workers Association some time in 1925. The report of Bengal PWP for 1927-28 records: "In the labour field (a) the party conducted propaganda among the jute workers, in conjunction with the 'Bengal Jute Workers Association'. The president, vice-president and general secretary of the association are party members, and it affiliated to the party in October 1927."<sup>142</sup> A contemporary Bengal government report mentions that the Bengal Jute Workers Union, "... took a prominent part in strikes some years ago and it was run by persons known to have extremist connections. Some of them indeed are at present under trial in the Meerut conspiracy case. Although its locus was Bhatpara, the officials had a habit of suddenly descending on any area where trouble had broken out. The union, for example, was active in several strikes in the Bauria-Chengail area."<sup>143</sup>

The Bengal Jute Workers Union was a union for the entire industry and was formed at a time when the consciousness of the jute workers of Bengal had not reached a level to understand the need for a union at the entire industry level. The WPP did not have enough cadre to follow this up by simultaneously taking up work in individual mills where discontent was growing in the widespread jute mill area. Thus when the workers of the Chengail Jute Mill, where discontent was growing on the abovementioned grievances, were approached by Kishorilal Ghosh, they agreed to form the Chengail Ludlow Jute Mill Workers Union. But the jute-mill bosses, determined not to allow

142. *A Call to Action*, p 47.

143. Com. Dept. File 30, 1 April 1930, Nos 13-18, cf. *History of the Workingclass Movement in Bengal*, by P. Saha, p 112.

any effort by the workers to form a trade union, began dismissing workers who had joined the union. This, apart from other demands, was the main issue of the Chengail jute workers' strike. The incident described by Radharaman Mitra about the treatment meted out to Mahadeo proves this (Document 30).

This strike which lasted for 18 days (23 April to 10 May 1928) was concluded with an agreement on 10 May 1928. The extract from Ghosh's statement (Document 31) gives also the terms of settlement.<sup>143a</sup> These terms are also given in a statement which Kishorilal Ghosh sent to the *Statesman* contradicting some of the misstatements made by the paper in the issue dated 11 May 1928.<sup>143b</sup> P. Spratt and Bankim Mukherjee, secretary, Ludlow Jute Mill Workers Union, Chengail, participated during the negotiation in which the agreement was concluded.

There were two more strikes by the jute workers in 1928, one in June and the other in November as recorded by Kishorilal Ghosh. He says: "There were two more strikes there—of which one was declared by the women workers, who complained that the head-clerk had promised them some increment which was not fulfilled, and because of the nature of work they performed they held up the working of the entire mill by this declaration of the strike. The other was due to dismissal of 50 workers."<sup>144</sup> Kishorilal Ghosh in his lengthy statement gives a detailed account of the negotiation after the November strike at the end of which, as he says, he asked the workers to go back to work. This advice was given only on the vague promise given by the authorities to take back the dismissed workers without specifying any time limit.<sup>145</sup>

The strike of the 15,000 workers of the three mills in Bauria lasting for six months has been described by Muzaffar Ahmad as the "longest ever strike" of the jute workers.

143a. Meerut Record, D 174(1).

143b. *Ibid*, D 174(3).

144. *Ibid*, Kishorilal Ghosh's statement, P 1081.

145. *Ibid*, P 1084.

We are reproducing an account of the strike by Radharaman Mitra who was an active participant of the same and the secretary of the Bauria Jute Workers Union (Document 32). In this strike workers were fighting the offensive of the millowners who wanted to enforce retrenchment on them by introducing one shift instead of two and by increasing the hours of work.

The mill bosses started the offensive from 13 July when they locked out the Old Mill. The workers formed their union on 15 July to meet the offensive. Dismissal of the five leading workers and the attack on the workers by the jamadars and boatmen took place on 16 July, after which, the strike spread to all the three Fort Gloucester mills. Radharaman Mitra describes the brutal repression launched by the mill bosses against the strikers in order to break their resistance. This included beating them and their families in their huts, employing goondas in the effort to evict them from their quarters. But the workers stood firm and the strike continued for 3½ months, when the union leaders attempted to seek the intervention of general public and political circles to bring pressure on the mill bosses.

By this time the strike had attracted the sympathy and attention of the politically minded public. Meetings were taking place in the mill area almost every day in which the leading workers of the WPP such as Radharaman Mitra, Gopen Chakravarty, Kalidas Bhattacharya, Philip Spratt and Muzaffar Ahmad took part. From among the strikers a large number of active militants had emerged who were participating in picketing, collecting money and volunteer duties. Kishorilal Ghosh points out that about Rs 1800 and about 70 maunds of rice were collected by the workers and from among the citizens. He also records that some relief was distributed amongst the very needy workers. Appeals were sent for help to the general secretary, AITUC, to GKU and to the international workingclass organisations.

The strike was continuing in the last week of December when the delegates began to arrive for the AICC meeting and for the Calcutta session of the Congress. Union leaders

took the initiative to get an appeal addressed to the delegates of Congress signed by several trade-union leaders and public figures. Among the signatories were V. V. Giri, Bankim Mukherjee, Gopen Chakravarty, Kalidas Bhattacharya, Mrinalkanti Bose, Kishorilal Ghosh and others. This appeal was published in *Amrita Bazar Patrika* on 31 December 1928. The full text of this appeal is available in the Meerut case record. It is a defence document introduced by Kishorilal Ghosh.<sup>145a</sup>

In his statement before the court Kishorilal says that he initiated this move in consultation with Daud, Mrinalkanti Bose and Radharaman Mitra. The appeal was issued towards the end of December 1928 when the strike had already lasted for over five months. It described how at this time the mill bosses were trying to break the strike. The appeal says: "...every possible attempt is being made to break the strike, to terrorise the workers into submission undesirable toughs are being brought from the entire jute area, the unemployed as well as unemployable are being lured on by hopes of higher wages." When the striking workers resisted the activities of the blacklegs the militant strike leaders were themselves being arrested.

The only response to this appeal was an appeal by Jawaharlal Nehru who had been by that time elected president of the AITUC at the Jharia session in the first week of December 1928. Appreciating the valiant fight of the striking jute workers of Bauria mills Jawaharlal Nehru added his voice to the appeal for support of the struggle in the following words: "The employers are behaving after the manner of their kind; the workers are struggling manfully with amazing courage against tremendous odds. But what of the public? What of the awakened youth of the country? What are they doing to help in this struggle? What have they done? It is sad but little has so far been done by them. Are they prepared to see the arrogant lords of jute aided by all the powers of government crush the poor workers

of Bauria and set this example to all the jute workers of Bengal? For the struggle is not a local one merely but one which affects the whole jute area and the trade-union movement in India."

These appeals came at a time when the workers reached the point of exhaustion after more than five months of strike and when the mill bosses intensified their offensive against the striking workers by beating up the strikers through hired goondas. The mill bosses were bent on breaking the strike and teach them a lesson and, as Radharaman Mitra says, they succeeded.

The main gains from these two strikes were: (1) A militant cadre of workingclass leaders began to emerge from among the jute workers themselves to organise their union and struggle for their basic demands. (2) It also began to become clear to the workers that the oppression and the exploitation of the mill bosses can only be fought not by fights in individual mills but by a general strike of the workers. It is in this sense that these two strikes, at Chennagail and Bauria, were a sort of a dress rehearsal for the general strike of jute workers which took place in 1929.

#### THE SIR STRIKE

The South Indian Railway workers' strike, led by the SIR Labour Union (which had already been functioning since December 1927) and by the strike committee it formed, involving 17,500 workers which closed down three workshops at Nagapattinam, Podanur and Golden Rock and paralysed mainly the work on the metre gauge and also the broad gauge for 10 days from 20 July to 30 July 1928 was described by the Madras government administrative report as "the most important event of the year".

This strike, like the previous strikes on the BNR at Kharagpur and on the EIR at Lilloah, was the first result of the policy of retrenchment pursued by the railway authorities who were seeking to save their sagging profit which had been affected by the oncoming depression.

The account of the SIR strike which forms a part of K. N. Joglekar's statement before the Meerut court (Document 33) gives the details of how the scheme of retrenchment in the railways on the basis of Raven report of 1926 was step by step implemented in the SIR workshops. The scheme, which was first put into effect in the BNR workshops leading to the strikes in Kharagpur in 1927 referred to in the earlier volume, was announced by the agent of SIR on 9 September 1927. The militant section of the AIRF leadership had put forward a proposal to organise an all-India railway strike which helped the BNR workshopmen to gain some of their demands. Now the same leadership immediately reacted to the retrenchment move of the SIR and began active propaganda on the SIR line in preparation to resist it.

The hurricane propaganda undertaken by the SIR Union with the help of Singaravelu Chettiar and Mukundalal Sarkar led to a broad conference of SIR Union at Nagapattinam on 21 and 22 January 1928 which condemned retrenchment as "unnecessary". In March the railway authorities finalised their retrenchment scheme and made public the details in April. This involved retrenchment of 3171 workshopmen, details of which are given in the excerpt from Joglekar's statement.

Joglekar describes how the railway authorities, taking into account of the strength of the union and its preparation to resist the retrenchment move, tried to divide the workers by offering to consider the grievances of the linemen and menials and offering to the men to be retrenched a scheme of liberalised bonus scheme if they voluntarily resigned. The workers did not pay any heed to the offer and the strike preparations went ahead. A further offer was made by the authorities liberalising the bonus scheme for the men who would volunteer to resign. This deceptive and disruptive offer had no effect on the workers. On 28 June the central committee of the union wired to the agent demanding withdrawal of the retrenchment circular and all round increase of pay, increase of pay of unskilled labour and failing a reply a stay-in-strike would be resort-

ed to. On 28 June the workers of Podanur, Nagapattinam and Golden Rock resorted to a stay-in-strike. The authorities declared a lockout on 29 June 1928. The lockout move was countered by a huge demonstration of engineering workers on 30 June at Tiruchchirappalli and at the meeting held on that day presided over by Mukundalal Sarkar it was decided to start a general strike of SIR workers from 14 July if the retrenchment notice was not withdrawn.

Joglekar says that Singaravelu and Mukundalal Sarkar, with the mandate of the strike leadership, took the initiative to explore the possibilities of an all-India railwaymen's strike, left for Bombay on 1 July to discuss with the leaders of other railways. Their plan was to have a meeting of the All India Railwaymen Federation in support of the SIR workers. As result of their effort V. V. Giri agreed to convene AIRF meeting at Tiruchchirappalli on 18. Alarmed at this move the government acted in a vindictive manner and prevented all communications of this move reaching the SIR workers' leaders at Madras.

Meanwhile the strike leadership at Madras, ignorant of the developments about the all-India action and the proposal to postpone the date of the strike, went ahead with the preparation of the general strike on 20 July when all their efforts of securing a reasonable settlement were bluntly rejected by the agent.

Describing the salient events of the ten days of the actual strike, Joglekar particularly emphasises the heroic mass actions of the SIR workers in spreading the strike on the line despite most brutal repression by the government and the railway authorities. Mass clashes as well as peaceful satyagraha in their effort to stop the running of the trains were a special feature of the strike as distinguished from the earlier railway strikes. Joglekar has described this militant workingclass action in detail and paid a glowing tribute in the concluding sentences: "This strike has a very prominent place in the history of the labour movement in India. It only lasted for ten days, but these ten days are a glorious chapter in the Indian workingclass struggle."

Joglekar correctly emphasises that the leadership of the



union and the leading workers put in considerable organisational and agitational work in the prestrike days. These consisted of mass meetings and demonstrations in main centres in the SIR and also of instructions and reports in *Thozhilali*, the Tamil organ of the union. As a result, the workers were able to organise a series of militant mass actions in various centres in the very first five days after the general strike began at the midnight on 19/20 July. Joglekar gives a vivid and detailed account of these actions. It will suffice to give a list of some of the incidents in chronological order:

—On 20 itself it is recorded that the strike was not only complete in the metre-gauge section but also the broad-gauge section was considerably affected.

—On 21 the railway authorities suspended a number of trains and concentrated their military and police forces to keep the through trains running.

—Between 21 and 23, there were a number of incidents in which the workers tried to stop the running of through trains at various places, resulting in a series of clashes between the workers and the police in which several workers were killed and a large number injured. No details are available about all these incidents but from the reports available only two incidents can be identified, one at Mayavaram and another at Villupuram. Both were parts of the satyagraha campaign organised by the workers which were sought to be brutally crushed by the authorities resulting in several deaths and casualties. A round of repression in a serious form continued from 23 to 27 and almost the entire leadership of the SIR workers headed by M. Singaravelu, Mukundalal Sarkar (members of AIRF), D. K. Pillai (president, central committee of the union), Narayanaswami (secretary of strike committee), and Ismail Khan (president), propaganda committee, Podanur, were arrested. No authentic account of the total arrests, which included a large number of leading workers, is available. But it is on record that cases were instituted against at least more than 40 workers and their leaders, prominent amongst them were

M. Singaravelu, Mukundalal Sarkar and D. K. Pillai who along with other charges were also charged with conspiracy under section 120 (b) and 109 (c) IPC.

Simultaneously the police searched several local offices of the union and the office of *Thozhilali* in order to prepare cooked up evidence to buttress the alleged charge of conspiracy. It is on record that all persons were sentenced to terms of imprisonment ranging from six months to ten years, Singaravelu, Mukundalal Sarkar, D. K. Pillai and a couple of workers were awarded the brutal sentence of 10 years R.I. Later on appeal the sentence was reduced to 18 months and they were released in August 1930.

Joglekar is quite right in condemning Shiva Rao and Ernest Kirk, who not only condemned the strike move as unwise but went a step further after general strike began by trying to induce the few workers under their influence to go to work. But they miserably failed. Despite the vicious propaganda of these reformists and the imperialists that the strike was communist inspired, the general sympathy of the public was with the strikers and against the adamant railway authorities and the repressive measures of government. For instance, the Calcutta daily *Forward*, commenting on the Villupuram incident where the police made a bayonet charge on the strikers, wrote "The race of dividend hunters will easily detect in these violent actions the mystic hands of Moscow. But can outside influence work so much havoc in men's mind as to make them lay open their hearts to policemen's bullets?"

In September, long after the strike had ended, S. Satyamurti, leader of the Congress Party in the Madras legislative council, attempted to move an adjournment motion on the strike, demanding an explanation why the government did not intervene in time to get a settlement of the demands of the workers from the British railway company which owned the SIR. In the course of his speech on 4 September 1928 he said:

"Sir, according to the government order, dated 31 August 1928, there were from the very beginning four points for arbitration by the government outstanding between the

company and the workers. These four points were payment of lockout wages, absorption of surplus men after voluntary resignation, increasing of the menials' wages and redressing of runningmen's grievances.

"Now Sir, the government should have volunteered their good offices to bring about a settlement on these outstanding disputes between the workers and the railway company. The government say that the agent was willing to accept the principle of arbitration in regard to the matter of menials' wages and the running staff's grievances but it happened only after the strike had been called. But he declined to do anything with regard to the first two of the items.

"Then, Sir, the general strike came on to which I will not refer. But I want the house to notice that even after the strike had been declared with the resultant great loss to the company, the public and the merchants, the government showed their indifference and did not offer to arbitrate between the workers and the employers. I will not refer to the action of the police and the magistracy in this matter. But I want to say that at no time during these anxious days and nights the government was sensible of its duties to the thousands of labourers who had gone on strike and to use their good offices with the company to see that these matters were referred to arbitration and an amicable settlement was arrived at. The government thought that unless both parties agreed they could not arbitrate. I do not dispute the law, for it is not my intention that they should force arbitration.

"The company is after all a government concern, nearly thirteen-fourteenths of its capital being Indian tax payers' money. It was open to the government to offer their good offices to the agent of the railway company and tell him that the interests of the tax-payer were impaired as also those of thousands of labourers. My complaint is that the government have not contemplated to use their moral influence and their prestige with the South Indian Railway Company to see that the company accept arbitration in this matter.

“Then after the strike had broken out what happened was that the agent, who was originally willing to accept the arbitration on at least two of the points, said that he could not accept even those points; and more than that, Mr President, he has made any possibility of successful or harmonious negotiations between himself and the workers impossible by his arbitrary and unjust withdrawal of the recognition of the South Indian Railway Labourers Union which, I think, is wholly illegal.”

After the strike was called off the railway authorities in the later period carried out their rationalisation plan, closing the workshops at Podanur and Nagapattinam and transferred the workers to the Golden Rock Workshop which was expanded and equipped with modern machineries. The heroic struggle of the SIR workers, though it did not result in immediate gains for the workers, became in the succeeding period the precursor of a strong union of the SIR workers centred at Golden Rock and being led by the communists.

## VIII

### JHARIA SESSION OF THE AITUC

The ninth session of the AITUC held at Jharia, in the coalfields, between 18 and 21 December, took place at a time when the strike upsurge of the working class, in terms of men involved, had reached the highest peak ever up to date. As communists and WPP leaders played a prominent part in most of these strikes, the left wing led by the communists represented at the session was much stronger than at the last session at Kanpur, and its fight against the reformist leadership, which was at that time in overall control of AITUC, was far more effective than ever before.

Documents 34 and 37, two articles by B. F. Bradley, describe in detail the fight which the communists and the WPP group waged at the session against the reformists on the concrete issues which came before the session.

Bradley, who was working closely with the WPP, Bombay, since his arrival in India, had participated in the Bombay textile strike and was also active in organising the railway workers. He was one of the vice-presidents of the All India Railwaymen's Federation on behalf of the GIP Railway Workers Union. He attended the AITUC session as a delegate from GIP Railway Workers Union and actively participated in its proceedings.

Apart from these two articles reproduced here there are other articles dealing with the Jharia AITUC session written by him, which were produced in the Meerut conspiracy case as evidence against him. In his statement before the Meerut court in which he exhaustively deals with the Indian trade-union movement there is a section dealing with the Jharia session.

The two articles were probably prepared for the press. But what actually appeared in the press was an article titled "The Jharia Congress" in *Spark* dated 10 February 1929. The statement on the trade-union movement was also printed as a pamphlet in Great Britain in the early thirties. The two articles selected for reproduction together give a complete analysis of the session as the communist viewed it at that time. The other contemporary materials mentioned above as well as the official contemporary records of the session available in the *Trade Union Bulletin*, organ of the AITUC, are used here as sources of additional information.

In the first article Bradley emphasises the fact that the massive workingclass struggles against the background of which Jharia session was meeting were mainly of a defensive character. That is, the workers were defending their already existing low living standard against the attacks by the capitalists in the form of rationalisation, retrenchment and enhanced workload. The Jharia session, Bradley points out, could not rise to the occasion and give a militant lead to the workers because the AITUC at that time was dominated by the reformist leadership and the left wing led by the communists was not strong enough to counteract their influence.

Bradley made this point clear in his statement before the Meerut court when he deals with the Jharia session: "The main reason for this was the fact that the reformists were there in majority, unfortunately several of the new militant trade unions were unable to affiliate to the Congress owing to the rule that a union had to be in existence for one year. Under this rule unions like the Girni Kamgar Union were unable to send delegates."<sup>146</sup>

The open session of the Jharia congress began in the afternoon of 18 December with about 200 delegates representing 98,600 organised workers and a number of political figures attending as visitors, prominent amongst the national figures were Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr Bhupendranath Dutta, Mrs Prabhavati Dasgupta and Ramananda Chatterjee. F. W. Johnstone, representing the League against Imperialism, and Jack Ryan from Australia representing the Pan Pacific Trade Union Secretariat were the two foreign delegates who attended as invitees. Bradley records that in the morning of 18 the executive committee of the TUC met as also on 19 and 20 and discussed organisational questions such as the credential committee report, about the affiliation of unions, amendments to the constitution, and it finalised the draft report of the general secretary for the open session as well as other resolutions. The agenda gone through by the open session on the first day was address of the chairman of the reception committee, address of the president of the session, M. Daud, circulation of the draft report of the general secretary along with the statement of accounts up to 30 November and the speeches by fraternal delegates and others. It is on record that this open session concluded for the first day with the speeches of fraternal delegates F. W. Johnstone and J. Ryan and those of B. F. Bradley, P. Spratt and Jawaharlal Nehru.

Bradley has given a vivid description of how F. W. Johnstone was arrested immediately after the first day's open session was adjourned and the delegates were coming out. Bradley describes "I was walking out of the pandal

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146. Meerut Record, Bradley's statement, P 661.

with Chamanlal and J. Nehru followed by J. Ryan and F. W. Johnstone, Kirk and others. When a little way down the road the news was brought to us that Johnstone had been arrested we went back and found that the police had been waiting outside the congress with a motor car and directly he came out they got him in the car and drove off. We went to the police station but could not get any information about him. We later learnt that he had been taken to Calcutta and kept there for some days, then I believe he was brought to Bombay."<sup>147</sup>

The two printed documents circulated at the session were the presidential address of M. Daud and the draft of general secretary's report as amended by the executive council. The latter was adopted by the session.

Bradley records in his Meerut statement that Daud in his presidential address sharply criticised police firing on strikers. Later the session adopted a resolution on that which reads: "This congress emphatically protests against the employment of police and military forces on almost every important occasion of strike or lockout in order to intimidate the strikers into submission, resulting in many cases in the death of, and grievous injury to, unarmed workers." The resolution then goes on to state that this attitude of the government is inconsistent with its professed "neutrality and impartiality" in industrial disputes and warns the government that "grave discontent that is spreading among workers as a result of the unwarranted use of force against them". It calls upon the Provincial Trade Union Federation "to the necessity of organising effectively for the declaration of general strikes in the eventuality of force being employed against workers".<sup>148</sup>

The session adopted a resolution on imperialism reaffirming that it looks upon it "as a form of capitalist class government, intended to facilitate and perpetuate the exploitation and slavery of all workers, both white and coloured,

147. *Ibid*, P 650.

148. *Trade Union Bulletin*, Nos 7-11, January-May 1929: Resolution-  
No 14.

in the interest of capitalist class", and declares that the only safeguard against exploitation lies in creating class unity, solidarity and consciousness. The resolution further says: "This congress, therefore, expresses its willingness and desire to bring about the greatest possible solidarity and coordinated activity on the part of the trade unions throughout the world and oppose imperialism."<sup>149</sup> Therefore it would have been proper for the AITUC to affiliate with the League against Imperialism as the Indian National Congress had done in the previous year. But the reformist pressure resulted in the AITUC adopting a resolution affiliating with the LAI for one year only: "The unwarranted arrest and deportation order passed against our fraternal delegate, Mr Johnstone, representing the League against Imperialism, is a definite challenge to the All India Trade Union Congress. This Congress emphatically protests against the action taken by the government by declaring that the All India Trade Union Congress hereby decides to affiliate itself with the League against Imperialism for the ensuing year only."<sup>150</sup> By another resolution (No 20) the session elected D. R. Thengdi and K. N. Joglekar as delegates to the next session of the League scheduled to be held in July 1929. The second world congress of the League at Frankfurt-on-Main was held as scheduled. Shew Prasad Gupta attended it on behalf of the Indian National Congress. But D. R. Thengdi and K. N. Joglekar were already in jail, arrested in connection with the Meerut conspiracy case launched by the imperialist government, and were unable to attend.

Bradley points out (Document 34) that a lot of time was spent on the question of sending delegates to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), a body dominated by capitalist governments and to which the elected delegates of the TUC were sent with the financial assistance of the British government. The left wing led by the communists proposed severance of relation of the AITUC with this

149. Ibid, Resolution No 5.

150. Ibid, Resolution No 20 A.



body as its purpose was to promote class-collaboration by the trade unions. The move was defeated.

Dewan Chamanlal, who was elected member to the central legislative assembly with the Congress support, sided with the reformists and not only supported the ILO resolution but also when the question of international affiliation of the AITUC came up.

The International Federation of Trade Unions, the trade-union wing of the reformist Second International, was making an effort since the Kanpur session to get the AITUC affiliated to that organisation. With this purpose in view they sent A. A. Purcell, a Labour MP, and J. Hallsworth, representing the British Trades Union Congress, who attended that session. But at this session the issue of affiliation did not come up. But the two British leaders were probably sounding the reformist leadership of the Congress. On the eve of the Delhi meeting of the executive committee of the TUC, a letter from the IFTU inviting the AITUC to affiliate itself to that body was received.

The agenda circulated for this meeting contained the item of the affiliation of the AITUC to IFTU. The WPP and Dange seemed to have acted promptly and issued the article "The Conspiracy of Imperialism in the All India Trade Union Congress" (Document 35) published in *Herald*, an English daily of Bombay. and the WPP issued a circular to the trade unions affiliated to it (Document 36). Both these documents emphasise that a firm stand should be taken to prevent the AITUC's affiliation to the IFTU. What actually happened is recorded by Dange in the following words in his Meerut case statement: "Though the game of the Second Internationalists was foiled in Kanpur, they did not give it up. An official invitation was procured in the meantime from the IFTU to the TUC for affiliation to it. A meeting of the executive committee was arranged at Delhi in February 1928, and contrary to all constitutional procedure, though the full session of the Congress had not decided on any affiliation, the EC was being asked to decide on this vital matter without any consultation with the affiliated unions... Our reply to this was naturally to prevent

it, since the IFTU was only an agent of imperialism inside the workingclass movement, an agency that was dominated by the British Trades Union Congress and the politics of the Labour Party. In spite of this there was no proposal at this EC meeting from us for affiliation with the RILU and as regards the WWL [Workers Welfare League of India] we were merely asking for the status quo. The WPP circular to trade unions issued on this matter does not positively demand affiliation but says 'if any affiliation is considered it should be in favour of the RILU'. The result was that there was no affiliation to any international, though the official bureaucracy succeeded in disaffiliating the TUC from the WWL and appointing the British TUC as the agent of the Indian TUC."<sup>151</sup>

The resolution passed at the executive council meeting at Delhi proposed to enquire from the IFTU and British Trades Union Congress as to what steps were being taken to unite the world trade-union movement and stated that when as a result of these steps a "United Workers International" came into being, "the committee of the All India Trade Union Congress would be willing to recommend to that body such cooperation with them as would promote unity between various workers internationals."<sup>152</sup> This resolution was in consonance with the resolution adopted at the Kanpur session of the TUC which stated: "This Congress deploras the failure of the Anglo-Russian unity committee and urges that further efforts be made to bring about unity between the IFTU and RILU."<sup>153</sup> Thus we see that the efforts of the two British reformist leaders quietly begun at Kanpur and vigorously pursued by them at the Delhi meeting of the EC were defeated by the left wing.

It was in this background that the issue of international affiliation once again came up before the Jharia session (9th session) of the AITUC. Bradley (Document 34) states that two large unions had tabled a resolution proposing the

151. S. A. Dange, *Selected Writings*, Vol 3, pp 298-99.

152. *Trade Union Bulletin*, March 1928.

153. *Ibid*, December 1927-February 1928.

affiliation of the AITUC with the RILU. Dewan Chamanlal, as stated earlier, came in support of the reformists who were opposing the affiliation of the AITUC, both with the RILU and with the Pan Pacific Trade Union Secretariat. The latter body was seeking to coordinate the activities of the trade unions of the countries of the Pacific region and helped their organisation in a militant direction. Bradley describes Dewan Chamanlal as a "champion acrobat" because he was now supporting the labour reformists while just a few months back in Europe he was sharply criticising the British Labour Party for allowing two of its members to be included in the hated Simon commission and was thundering against the memorandum of the British Labour Party submitted at Brussels congress of the Second International in August 1928. In an interview given to *Pravda* correspondent during the Brussels congress Dewan Chamanlal sharply criticised this memorandum saying that it "contains not one single word concerning the cooperation of the Labour Party with Simon commission". He further trenchantly accused the Labour Party saying that the labour: "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. If the resolution<sup>154</sup> is adopted despite our protest, then in future India will have to refuse all offers of cooperation with the Second International."<sup>155</sup>

Despite this categorical statement we find Dewan Chamanlal supporting the reformists who were seeking to get the AITUC affiliated to the world trade-union wing of the Second International.

The Workers Welfare League of India, London, was an organisation started by leftwing trade-unionists and communists of Great Britain to help Indian workers who came as seamen to British ports, and as such it was keeping contact with the AITUC. At the Kanpur session of the Congress, Mardy Jones, an ILP member and a left trade-unionist, re

154. The proposal of the colonial commission—ED.

155. *Inprecor*, Vol 8, No 51, 17 August 1928.

presented the WWL. As Dange points out, at the Delhi session of the executive committee this contact of the WWL with the AITUC was ended and the British Trades Union Congress was appointed as the representative of the AITUC in Great Britain despite the opposition of leftists. At the Jharia session this decision of the Delhi EC was reviewed and the congress decided to have no representative of the AITUC in London. But the reformists succeeded in getting the EC decision to break the contact with the WWL confirmed. It should be mentioned here that Bradley had come to India as a representative of Workers Welfare League of India, and that the WWL was mentioned as a co-conspirator in the Meerut conspiracy case.

Towards the end of his article Bradley made a fervent appeal to all trade-unionists to carry out the protest campaign against the trade disputes bill which was before the legislative assembly at the time. The resolution adopted by the Jharia session on the subject stated that this bill makes all strikes in so-called essential services such as "railways, postal, telegraph and telephone services, light and water, public conservancy" illegal and also deprives "the workers of their right to declare a sympathetic strike and strikes of a political nature". The resolution declared that "the bill is a menace to the existence of the trade-union movement which must be resisted by all possible means". In its operative part the resolution calls for campaign of meetings and demonstrations leading to "one-day general strike of protest in the eventuality of the passage of the bill by the legislative assembly and a further general strike if the act is not rescinded". The resolution was unanimously adopted at the session.<sup>156</sup>

Document 37 is another article by Bradley on the Jharia congress entitled "The Trade Union Congress and the Communists". Though it covers some of the ground already covered in the previous one it is important because it replied to the criticism made by the reformist labour leader Kirk about the role of the communists and the left

156. *Trade Union Bulletin*, January to May 1929, Resolution No 15.

wing in the session. And in doing so brings out new facts. The article written by Kirk must have appeared in the first week of January 1929 in the *Times of India* and *Statesman*. It reflected the annoyance and anger of the reformists and of the official circles at the prominent role played by the left wing in giving the AITUC a militant turn.

The text produced here is of the copy sent to "Editor, *Kirti*, Amritsar, Punjab"<sup>157</sup>, intercepted by the police, copied and reposted. The covering letter accompanying the article, signed by B. F. Bradley, is datelined Apollo Chambers, Fort, Bombay, 19 January 1929.<sup>158</sup>

Bradley seems to have written both the articles after he returned to Bombay from Calcutta. An abridged version of his first article appeared in *Spark* (Vol 1, No 2, 10 February 1929). The second article *perhaps* was printed in the February issue of *Kirti*. Another typed copy of the second article was found in the office of the WPP, Bombay, and produced as prosecution exhibit in the Meerut conspiracy case.<sup>159</sup> This copy was captioned "Disruptionists in Trade Union Congress". By "disruptionists" Bradley means such reformist leaders like Kirk and Shiva Rao, who, alarmed at the enhanced influence of the left in the TUC were recommending either expulsion of the left wing from the TUC or separation from them. Bradley sums up the significance of the stand of the left wing at the session in the following words which he has given in the main caption, namely, "Tug-of-war between Cooperators with Imperialism and Attempt to Give it a Real Workers' Expression".

In answering Kirk, Bradley concentrates on the point that the advance of the left wing against the unprincipled reformists at the session was because the communists and the left were united while the reformists, though in a majority, were disunited. Bradley points out that the left-wing success was not only due to the fact that they were

157. Meerut Record, P 1986 (E).

158. Ibid, P 1896 (P).

159. Ibid, P 1206 (1).

united but that they had a principled policy of making the Trade Union Congress into a united and militant organ of the working class in their struggle against capitalism. Exposing Kirk's lament that their failure was mainly due to their being "disunited", Bradley points out that they were very much united in passing a resolution of sending a delegation to the International Labour Conference, Geneva. They were very much united in passing a resolution on holding a "Asian labour conference" proposed by the Japanese imperialist agent Suzuki and supported by Chamanlal. Again they were very much united in opposing affiliation to Pan Pacific Trade Union Secretariat which Chamanlal said was an organisation banned by the government of India and actually to the "disunited" it was a red scare. In short the reformists were maintaining the major reformist trend and opposing every effort to give it a militant and anti-imperialist orientation. The left wing led by the communists was not only firmly united but acted in such a manner that it got the session to take a unanimous stand on the resolution on imperialism and on the affiliation to League against Imperialism. Similarly on the issue of international affiliation, though two leftwing unions had put forward a resolution proposing affiliation to the RILU, the left wing agreed to a compromise resolution of not affiliating to either IFTU or RILU until unity of the international trade-union movement was achieved.

The voting on the resolutions took place in the executive council meetings held during the session. We are giving some voting figures below: Memorandum on Asiatic Labour Conference by Yone Kubo supported by Dewan Chamanlal was adopted by 43 to 26 votes; the question of sending delegates to the ILO conference, Geneva, which has opposed by the leftists was adopted by 45 to 24 votes; on the question of affiliation to the PPTUS the amendment to ~~repeal the~~ affiliation for the next session was passed by 26 to 24 votes.

Criticising Kirk who attacked the left wing of having the "audacity" to put a candidate up for president of the Congress against J. Nehru, Bradley points out that the

leftwing candidate, D. B. Kulkarni, was a worker and a respected trade-union functionary and the reformists combined to defeat him by unitedly supporting Jawaharlal Nehru. The voting was 37 in favour of Nehru and 30 for Kulkarni.

Bradley concludes the article by correctly summing up the achievements of the TU Congress session at Jharid in the following words: "The communist group worked well and deserves the praise that Kirk pays them in the *Statesman*. They concentrated on making the trade-union movement of India a live body, an active body. Their object was to make the Congress reflect the feelings and wishes of the workers who today are living in slavery. They wanted to make the TUC the machine that is going to free them from the bonds of capitalism and imperialism and despite disruptionists like Kirk and Shiva Rao they will succeed."

Among the 67 resolutions, the majority of which concerns with the formulations of basic demands of the workers of different industries, there are certain resolutions of political and general importance which need to be mentioned here. The session adopted a resolution "Labour and Future Constitution of India" the text of which has already been reproduced in section III of this volume. The resolution in its operative part says: "This congress elects the members of its constitution committee, one member from each affiliated union and Mr R. R. Bakhale—the total not exceeding 50 as its delegation to the All Parties Convention." It will be remembered that one of the members of the abovementioned constitution committee was P. Spratt, who drafted the document "Labour and Swaraj" reproduced in section III. By another resolution the congress demanded the implementation "Minimum wage convention passed by the last International Labour Conference, Geneva". Formulating the general demands of working class by another resolution which demanded among others "adult franchise", "8-hour day or 44-hour week", "machinery for fixing minimum wage", "sickness and unemployment insurance", "maternity benefits" etc. By another reso-

lution the congress accorded its full support to following peasant demands and urged upon all political parties to campaign for the same. The demands are: "(1) abolition of landlordism and zamindari system of land tenure; (2) exemption of land revenue assessment of peasants whose annual income is less than Rs 500 and introduction of graduated land revenue assessment on the basis of income tax; (3) restriction of extortionate interest at 12 per cent per annum." The *TU Bulletin* giving the full report of the session, from which we have extracted the reference to the abovementioned resolutions, also records that fraternal messages were received from the following national and international TU organisations:

1. The Trades Union Congress, General Council, London.
2. The Irish Labour Party and TU Congress, Dublin.
3. Workers Welfare League of India, London.
4. League against Imperialism, Berlin.
5. All Ceylon Trade Union Congress, Colombo.
6. Minority Movement, Great Britain, London.
7. Pan Pacific Trade Union Secretariat, Shanghai.
8. General Federation of Finnish Trade Union Congress, Helsinki.
9. Russian Council of Trade Unions.
10. Trade Union Education League of America.

The message of the British Trades Union Congress refers to the visit of its delegation consisting of Purcell and Hallsworth and the report they later published on the condition of the workers in India. The message from the Pan Pacific Trade Union Secretariat and its affiliates states that the proposed Asian Labour Conference to be held in Bombay is calculated to counter the efforts of coordinating activities of the PPTUS. The message from the League against Imperialism calls for the affiliation of the TUC to the same and invited its delegation to its forthcoming conference in 1929. It mentions the message received from the Russian Council of Trade Unions which invited the AITUC to send its delegates to the "Pacific Trade Union Conference summoned by the Pan Pacific Trade Union



Secretariat early August 1929 at Vladivostock". It was intercepted by the British police and produced as prosecution evidence together with another message from the Red International Labour Unions. It appears that a copy of the first message reached the Jharia Congress but another copy together with the message from the RILU were intercepted by the police and produced as prosecution evidence in the Meerut conspiracy case.<sup>160</sup> A message from the All China Labour Federation addressed to the Jharia session appeared in *Inprecor*.<sup>161</sup> It appears that it was also intercepted and totally suppressed. We are reproducing the text of these three messages (Documents 38-40).

160. Meerut Record, P 2086 and P 1662.

161. *Inprecor*, Vol 8, No 77, 2 November 1928.

# I. New Phase of India's National Movement

## 1. THE NEW PHASE OF THE NATIONAL REVOLUTIONARY STRUGGLE IN INDIA

It was during the immediately postwar of 1920-21 that the social forces of the national revolution in India came to an initial trial of strength with British imperialism. Objective factors combined with the conscious "defeatism" of bourgeois leadership brought the movement of 1920-21, rich with great promises, to a formidable collapse. After some years of recuperation, the national revolutionary struggle has now entered on a new and distinct phase, rich in greater promises than 1920-21 because coming at the moment of a new conjuncture of objective factors and a different leadership.

This is abundantly clear from the rapid development of the situation in India, more particularly since the commencement, more than two months ago, of the boycott campaign against the British commission on constitutional reform. It is not precisely the anti-imperialist attitude of the bourgeois nationalist parties which gives its physiognomy to the new phase of the movement. The attitude of these parties is anti-imperialist, but it is not necessarily revolutionary. The history of the last few years exposes the character of the national bourgeoisie of India as a social class which is combative against British imperialism but only up to a given point.

The boycott campaign is remarkable for its initial momentum and intensity. The commission which is to be boycotted has not yet arrived in India and begun its labours; the full forces of the boycott campaign has yet to be deployed. But already the situation in India is causing great anxiety in imperialist circles. According to a report in the *London Times* the agitation in India has created "a profound im-

pression in some quarters in London". The *Times* itself, in its editorial article, regrets that Lord Birkenhead, the secretary of state for India, did not take the Indian bourgeois leaders into greater confidence at the time of nominating the commission.

Meanwhile in India there is talk of the resignation of the viceroy. The officially inspired Anglo-Indian press has been forced to note with unconcealed uneasiness that the commission "does not command the degree of confidence necessary to make its work fruitful and its recommendations acceptable". It is even suggested that the actual work of the commission should be postponed, to allow its president, Sir John Simon, to make a report to the British parliament on the menacing situation that has developed in India.

If we simply confine ourselves to the attitude of the bourgeois nationalist parties, it is difficult to see why there should be all this "profound impression" in England.

There is the tendency represented by the nationalist right-wing which refuses to cooperate with the present commission but does not contest the "principle" of commission appointed by the British parliament to "determine the constitution (of) ? India". As a matter of fact, it is suggested by some of the parties of the right that, given another commission, "with equal status" for Indian representatives, they would be willing to reconsider the question of boycott. There is certainly nothing in this "challenge" which may cause Baldwin the loss of a night's sleep.

There is the other tendency represented by the nationalist centre (principally the Swarajist Party) which, in addition to boycotting the present commission denies the right of any commission (with or without Indian representatives) appointed by the British parliament, to determine the constitution of India. But while denying this "right" to an emanation of the British parliament, it does not deny it to the British parliament itself. Whatever constitution the Swarajists or the National Congress may make by their unaided labours, it is intended to "submit", "forward" or "present" it—through a "round table conference" of "pleni-

potentiaries" or some other equally "legal" medium—to the British parliament for "acceptance" or "rectification".

Far from being a "challenge" it is really an offer of direct cooperation with the ultimate authority, namely, the executive committee of the imperialist bourgeoisie as represented in the British parliament. It is another matter whether the British parliament is willing at the present moment to waive its "rules of etiquette" and accept the parvenu Indian bourgeoisie to an equality of political intercourse. In any case the imperialists can lay the flattering unction to their soul that the most militant parties of the national bourgeoisie of India do not challenge imperialism as such but only its methods of "constitutional" procedure.

But perhaps the real challenge is concealed in the kind of constitution which the Indian National Congress is preparing for presentation to the British parliament. There is the fact—quite historical in another sense—that the National Congress at its December session at Madras has accepted complete national independence as the basis of the coming constitution. It should have had all the significance of a challenging political act, if it were accompanied by an appropriate program of action. It was not so accompanied.

On the other hand there are the utterances of the leaders of the Congress and there is the concrete proposal for convoking a national convention composed of the representatives of only two per cent of the population, to be set up by the Congress for the discussion and the adoption of the constitution. If these are any guide, it is easy to foresee that the fundamental basis of the new constitution will not be the complete separation from the British empire but some sort of compromise between the interests of the native and the imperialist bourgeoisie, to be expressed in the political formula of "dominion status". There will be nothing new in it. The demand for dominion status—though, however, not in such a concrete form as a ready-made constitution to be presented to parliament—has been put forward all these years by the National Congress; it has not caused any acute political discomfort to anybody concerned.

No, the real challenge of the situation lies elsewhere. The boycott campaign has opened up possibilities for the participation by broad masses in the fight against imperialism. The appeal to mass action in whatever form is thus the real challenge to the authority of the British parliament trying to dictate to India what constitution it shall or shall not have.

Among the nationalists, it is the unorganised leftwing which has arrived at some comprehension of the importance of this fact. In the swarajist organ *Forward* which, though committed to the official swarajist policy, nevertheless expresses leftist psychology from time to time, we read:

"If Indians had failed in the past to compel submission to their will, it was mainly because the problem of swaraj had been approached more or less from the view point of the upper classes, and the masses had practically remained outside the fold... The need of the hour is to bring into being an impressive movement such as the country saw during the closing months of 1921... A dynamic and comprehensive program must be devised so as to rally throughout the whole country the teeming voiceless millions of India behind the boycott movement... No movement for national liberation has any chance of success unless it can bring the masses within its fold."

But what gives its distinction to the new phase of the national revolutionary struggle is not that there is an appeal to mass action from the side of the national bourgeoisie. What is really distinct and original in the present situation is that the broad masses are entering the arena of the fight for national independence as a conscious political factor. At their head and as their vanguard, stand the organised workers and peasants. Such a fact signifies the transition from one period of the national revolutionary struggle to another. It carries with it a stupendous promise. It brings the national revolutionary struggle to a higher stage of development than it has reached up till now. It objectively poses the question: What social class or what coalition of social classes shall win for itself the role of the

hegemony in the national revolutionary struggle which is now opening. It also indicates the answer.

The federation of the trade unions of Bombay and the All India Congress of Trade Unions have adopted resolutions demanding the complete boycott of the commission. The action of the rank and file in the trade unions is still more significant. We have the example of the union of the municipal workers of Bombay which has decided to come out on strike on the day when the British commission lands in Bombay. The importance of such a decision can be gathered from the fact that already the British authorities have threatened the *municipal workers* of Bombay with dismissal and persecution, if they come out on strike. In response to this threat, the workers have repeated their determination to strike and have asserted their right to strike. Movements for similar strike action are extending to the *dock workers* of Bombay and the general body of *railway workers* throughout the country.

The leadership in this mass movement falls on the *Workers and Peasants Party* which has already for more than a year been functioning in the principal provinces of India as the legal political organisation of the proletariat and the peasantry. The *Workers and Peasants Party* has published a manifesto in which it says:

"The *Workers and Peasants Party* has no illusion about the royal commission and reiterates its conviction that, not through such commissions but only by developing and bringing into action the basic force of the nation, the dynamic action of organised workers and peasants, can there be any really valuable and vital political results.

"It therefore proposes to call on the organised and unorganised toiling masses of this land to demonstrate in unambiguous and unmistakable terms (mass action including strikes and demonstrations) their active indifference for such commissions intended to side-track the attention of the Indian people.

"Further the party challenges the very right of British imperialism to sit in judgement over the political destiny of this land and emphatically condemns the shortsighted

policy in compromising tendencies of the other political groups who quibble over the personnel of the commission and thereby fundamentally forsake the principle of self-determination, the inherent right of every nation."

The action by the peasantry proper is confined at the moment to the important northern province of the Punjab. The peasantry of this province took a very important part in the revolutionary movement of 1920-21. In the journal *Kirti* (Toiler) which comes out with the emblem of the sickle and the hammer and which is the organ of the labour and peasant movement in the Punjab, we have a correct revolutionary appreciation of the present situation. The journal demands that the crisis which is developing should be utilised for the organisation of proletarian and peasant masses for striking a blow against imperialism.

Finally the Communist Party of India as the party of the revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat has put forward the slogan of the *convocation of constituent assembly* for determining the constitution of India. The slogan has been chosen as the most appropriate for the given stage of the development of the situation. It is the most direct challenge to the authority of the British parliament. It will bring the masses into the fight against imperialism on a nationwide basis, and prepare the ground for militant mass action leading to eventual insurrection.

In putting forward the slogan, the Communist Party of India declares:

"The reply to the imperialist challenge should be: 'We spit on your royal commission whose authority we totally disregard. We do not recognise your right to determine the constitutional progress of India.' That right belongs only to the Indian people who are determined to conquer that right at all cost and by all means. The demand should be the convocation by the National Congress of a constituent assembly which will be the supreme organ of the people's power and as such settle the questions as regards the form of government, relation with Britain etc. The entire people must participate in the election of the constituent assembly. Committees for the election of the constituent assembly

should be set up all over the country. Representatives of all the political parties, workers and peasants organisations and all other democratic bodies will sit on these committees. The election campaign must be carried on throughout the country over a period of at least a year. The largest possible section of the population should be drawn into the campaign through mass meetings, demonstrations, strikes, etc."

There is a great difference now from the similar situation in 1920-21. In the further development of the present crisis, the young and militant proletariat of India will not be without the guidance of its class party, the Communist Party of India.

G. A. K. LUHANI

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 2 February 1928

## 2. THE INDIAN STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE

The session of the Indian National Congress held in Madras at the end of 1927 marks a turning point in the history of the Indian nationalist movement. It makes it necessary to examine very carefully the nature and significance of the new developments and, especially in view of reactions here, brings us sharply up against the question as to what should be the attitude of British labour towards the Indian struggle.

The focus of attention has been the boycott of the statutory commission appointed in accordance with the provisions of the government of India act of 1919, "for the purpose of inquiring into the working of the system of government" and to "report as to whether it is desirable to establish the principle of responsible government, or to extend, modify or restrict the degree of responsible government existing" in British India. The appointment of the commission has raised the fundamental issue of acceptance of the right of



the British ruling power to determine the character of the Indian constitution, and is noteworthy for the intensity and unanimity of the opposition and hostility it has evoked, but it is not itself the central feature of the present situation. The boycott of the commission has been embarked upon for a variety of reasons and, while in itself an act of opposition to British imperialist interests, does not necessarily involve any fundamental antagonism.

The most outstanding immediately apparent mark of the new stage is the development of the struggle to one directed against British imperialism as a whole. This is very noticeably expressed in the new resolutions of the National Congress. In spite of the return of some right-wing politicians like Mrs Annie Besant, who had long ago abandoned the Congress on account of its "extremist" character, the Madras session showed a pronounced move to the left. Decisions were taken which were even unexpected and surprising to the leaders themselves.

For the first time, it proclaimed in clear terms that "the Congress declares the goal of the Indian people to be complete national independence". This, at last, puts the nationalist movement on a level which goes beyond the aims of the upperclass Indians, and which was not previously reached even at the height of the noncooperation movement. At that time Gandhi defined the object of the noncooperation program to be the "redress of the Punjab-Khilafat wrongs" and the establishment of "swaraj", an indefinite term which came to be accepted by the chief leaders as meaning merely dominion status within the British empire.

Another characteristic sign of the present anti-imperialist standpoint was the decision to join and support the International League against Imperialism, founded at the conference in Brussels in February 1927. A resolution was passed opposing the war preparations of British imperialism in India and announcing:

"That in the event of the British government embarking on any warlike adventure, and endeavouring to exploit India in it for the furtherance of their imperialist aims, it

be the duty of the people of India to refuse to take any part in such a war or to cooperate with them in any way."

A further indication is to be seen in the resolution recording "assurances of full sympathy with the people of China in their fight for emancipation, who, in the opinion of the Congress, are the comrades of the Indian people in their joint struggle against imperialism".

The Chinese people are engaged in a mass struggle against foreign imperialism and against the agents and allies of foreign imperialism among themselves. Do the resolutions of the Indian National Congress then mean that the congress forces are similarly pledged to a life-and-death struggle with British imperialism? It is here that the contradiction within the Indian nationalist movement make themselves apparent. The definitely anti-imperialist character of the resolutions adopted by the Congress represents a notable advance indicating the forces at work inside the movement, but the leaders of the Congress give no sign that they intend to translate them into action, which would involve a mass revolutionary struggle.

The congress leadership is predominantly in the hands of the Indian middle class, who are connected by a thousand ties, economic and political, with the system of British domination and exploitation. They are in the main the same leaders who were responsible for stifling the mass revolutionary movement in 1920-22. The right wing is openly hostile even to the attitude of anti-imperialism, is against the independence declaration, and only supports the boycott of the Simon commission for tactical reasons. The swarajists or Congress Party, who constitute the largest section of the elected members of the legislatures based on the present narrow propertied franchise, look upon the independence resolution as a gesture, a reply to Birkenhead, rather than a real aim for the attainment of which practical measures need to be devised. Up to the eve of the congress, the old Swaraj Party leaders maintained their opposition to the independence demand, and in the draft constitution prepared for the Congress it finds no place.

The standpoint of the right wing was frankly expressed

by Lajpat Rai, himself an ex-member of the Swarajist Party, who made the following comment:

“We feel that any talk of complete national independence at the present moment by our own efforts is mere moonshine. The practical politician in India directs his energies to a compromise with the British government on such a basis as may be profitable to both... But those negotiations the British government will not enter into. That is why I am wholeheartedly in favour of boycotting the commission.”

This betrays the whole vacillating character of the bourgeois opposition to British imperialism. Even if the bourgeois nationalists do not admit, as Lajpat Rai does, that their object is an adjustment of relations with British imperialism which shall be “profitable to both”, yet they are in spirit opposed to their own Congress resolutions and averse to realising the consequences of their own decisions. Even on the boycott itself they are not united. Although those opposing the boycott are numerically insignificant, as shown, for example, in the large majority by which the legislative assembly determined that there should be no committees set up by it to cooperate with the commission, there is a section of landholders and big capitalist interests that hold out, while some of those who oppose the commission only to do so because of the nonrepresentation of Indians on it, and not in principle, while still more are opposed to the organisation of hartals and mass demonstrations.

What then determined the character of the anti-imperialist resolutions of the National Congress and their acceptance by the bourgeois leaders? The cause is to be found in the pressure from the rank-and-file of the nationalist movement which drove the leaders to take up a left position in order to prevent the leadership being taken out of their hands. Between the defeat of the noncooperation movement in 1922 and the new forward move in 1928 is a period not merely of passive recuperation and recovery after defeat, but of active development and class differentiation. It was a period of intensified industrial-

sation and economic exploitation. The ranks of the working class were augmented and their organisations strengthened and rendered more class conscious. The gulf was deepened between the proletarianised peasants and petty bourgeoisie and the Indian capitalists, who were more and more attracted towards union with British imperialism on the basis of the latter's policy of economic concessions. Thus, while the bourgeois leadership moved steadily to the right, the petty-bourgeois left-wing and the mass following of the Congress moved to the left and developed a more and more articulate voice in expressing its discontent with the policy of the leaders.

Take, for instance, the independence resolution. This has always been a demand of the left wing, and has been repeatedly put forward to the Congress by provincial organisations. The *Mahratta*, a leading right-wing organ, in commenting on the passage of the resolution at Madras, notes that already in previous years, "Mahatma Gandhi had to use all his tact and influence to induce congressmen to reject the proposal". Just prior to the congress, in November, Pandit Motilal Nehru, the leader of the Congress Party declared:

"The only result the present action of the government is likely to lead to is to strengthen the hands of that growing body of Indians who are working for complete independence. I am afraid those who are still for full responsible government within the empire will find it difficult to maintain the majority which they undoubtedly have at present."

It is clear that the leaders, who in November still felt that they had the majority, decided in December to bow to the storm, and to put forward the leftwing resolutions themselves, rather than face the possibility of being defeated. Under the pressure from below, which especially easily influences the petty-bourgeois leftwing, which is already conscious of the bankruptcy of bourgeois-nationalist policy, the bourgeois leaders have been compelled to proclaim that they too stand for uncompromising struggle with imperialism.

The rightwing elements, who are outside the Congress,

naturally consider that this is a dangerous policy. They already see the red light and are alarmed. Thus, we find Sir H. S. Gour, a loyalist moderate, declaring:

"The mentality of the Congress has been the mentality of the proletariat. It is run by those who advocate the doctrine of bolshevism. The undercurrent of its methods of work is bolshevik."

This is interesting as an instinctive expression of class feeling, but, actually, as we have seen, it is untrue. In spite of its radical declarations, the Indian National Congress remains in the hands of the Indian bourgeoisie and cannot provide the leadership for a revolutionary mass struggle. Consequently, the anti-imperialist resolutions, although significant of the pressure from below, have not the importance of a new revolutionary policy. If there was no force ready to challenge the present bourgeois leadership, it could not be said that the Indian national movement had advanced to a new state.

But the real significance of the new phase of the movement is to be found precisely in the emergence of such a challenge. The awakening revolutionary forces of the masses are beginning to group themselves under their own independent political leadership expressed through the Workers and Peasants Party. This party developed during the last two years through the alliance of leftwing nationalist groups with politically-conscious workingclass elements, and its growing activity and influence was one of the most significant features in the history of the past year.

At the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee in May 1927, the representatives of the Workers and Peasants Party put forward a proposed program for the National Congress which attracted considerable attention, although discussion on it was ruled out of order. The program demanded the adoption of complete national independence as the goal of the Congress, and called for the preparation of direct action by the masses, including the organisation of a general strike as a political weapon, through agitation in support of a program of demands for economic and political rights and organisation for the workers and peasants.

The Workers and Peasants Party played a prominent part in the Bengal-Nagpur Railway strike, and in working-class and peasant demonstrations during the year. At the same time it has an influential hold on the congress organisation in Bombay, and, in a lesser degree, elsewhere. It addressed its own manifesto to the National Congress proposing the calling of a constituent assembly on the widest possible basis in order to determine a constitution for India, and a program of action in support of it. Most noticeable of all is the fact that the mass demonstrations of workers which greeted the arrival of the Simon commission in Bombay were organised under the direct leadership of the Workers and Peasants Party.

This is a clear indication of the entry of the masses into the struggle as an independent political force. This marks the new stage into which the Indian struggle for independence is entering. As yet the demands of the Indian workers and peasants have been given little heed to by the nationalist movement as a whole. In proportion as their political organisation increases in strength, the centre of gravity of the Indian national struggle will shift to their side. Already this process is seen in the emphasis on the struggle against imperialism, for the overthrow of imperialist exploitation can only be realised through the independent revolutionary action of the masses. Every stage in the development of revolution, as Lenin has said, means a change in the mutual relations of the classes in the revolution, when the leadership is passing from the hands of one class, the bourgeoisie, into the hands of another class, the proletariat, which itself carries with it and leads the struggle of the peasants.

Should the British working class support the Indian struggle for independence ?

The British Labour Party has already by its actions answered this question in the negative. Not merely does it refuse support to the mass struggle of the Indian nationalists, but, by the actions and declarations of its leaders and by the participation of its representatives in the tory gov-

ernment commission, it has affirmed its solidarity with the policy of British imperialism in India.

While the leaders of the British Labour Party openly justify their solidarity with imperialism, proclaiming their faith in the empire, in capitalist policy towards India and in the supreme rights of the British parliament, there are some who defend their opposition to Indian nationalism on the ground that the Indian nationalist movement is led by capitalists and landlords who are only out for their own interests. This, for example, was the basis of the attack on Motilal Nehru which appeared in the *Glasgow Forward* as an answer to this criticism of the Labour Party.

Mr Mardy Jones, MP, speaking in India, in November 1927, made the following observations on the attitude of the Labour Party towards Indian selfgovernment:

“The (Labour) Party would not agree to place political power in the hands of wealthy merchants and landlord classes without a guarantee that the right of political citizenship would be extended to the people generally...” They would require very strong proof that the political and industrial leaders of India were sincerely prepared to secure the betterment of the workers and peasants of India.”

This kind of argument implies, in the first place, that Indian political freedom is a gift which the British Labour Party can bestow and not the outcome of a struggle against British imperialism. Secondly, it assumes that it is the wealthy classes to whom power will have to be given, provided only that proof of their good intentions is forthcoming.

But we have seen that the whole significance of recent developments is that the independent political struggle of the masses of the people is making headway even against the opposition of the upperclass leaders. It should then follow that the attitude of distrust of the latter on the part of British workers should involve support of the political demands of the workers and peasants. The leaders of the Labour Party, however, condemn the bourgeois-nationalists not from the point of view of the left wing, but from

exactly the same standpoint as the reactionary merchants, landholders and flunkies. MacDonald applauds the attempts of the Simon commission to get the rightwing nationalists to desert the congress and join the reactionaries, and so does the *Daily Herald*. In such cases, therefore, the claim to oppose the selfish interests of Indian capitalism is only a cover for support of British imperialism.

The real struggle of the Indian masses is already coming into the forefront and will become more and more prominent. Since the existing British imperialist exploitation is the greatest oppressor of the Indian masses, the struggle of the latter must be waged under the slogan of complete national independence. Solidarity of the British and Indian workers' movements demands, therefore, first of all support of the Indian struggle for independence. This support must be given to the Workers and Peasants Party as the political leader of the revolutionary mass struggle. Only by full support of the anti-imperialist struggle in India will it be possible to prevent British imperialism using India as a weapon against the workers in this country. Unity in the fight against imperialism is the foremost need of the hour.

CLEMENS DUTT

*Labour Monthly*,  
March 1928



## II. Boycott of Simon Commission

### 3. THE SIMON COMMISSION

The appointment and arrival of the Simon commission confront the national movement with a serious responsibility. The commission, which comes for the purpose of continuing the subjection of India to imperialist exploitation, serves to remind the whole nation of its servile status and the ills irremediable under the present system, which it suffers. It gives the nationalist movement a chance to rally the nation once more to the call of independence and the solution of its problems of poverty and misery. This opportunity must be seized.

The bourgeoisie has taken up an attitude of opposition to the commission, and many of its representatives, in common with the rest of the nation, have declared for boycott. We welcome support from any quarter. But we desire to warn the nation in general against the dangers to be expected from the participation and the leadership of a certain section of the bourgeoisie. This class has shown in the past, and many of its representatives are showing now, that they are not desirous of independence or even of democracy and freedom. (Even congressmen have drafted constitutions involving a literate franchise or even the present franchise.) They desire in their own interest, compromise with imperialism and use the enthusiasm of the masses as a weapon to extract concessions. Some propose Indian membership of the commission, some a parallel commission, some a round-table conference. All these things mean compromise, and the nation does not need compromise, it needs independence.

It is therefore necessary in the interests of the immense majority that the campaign for boycott and for indepen-

dence be carried forward with the greatest possible energy in spite of any sabotage or opposition.

Boycott must not be confined to those who may be called upon to give evidence. All must take part and demonstrate their determination to be free of all commissions responsible to a foreign government. The hartal must be made complete and strikes of workers be held on as large a scale as possible. Demonstrations must be held demanding independence and the solution of our pressing economic and political problems.

The campaign must not be allowed to end on 3 February. The bourgeois parties have called a conference for 12 February to frame a constitution for presentation to the government.

We declare that the only logical course, after the acceptance of independence as our aim, is the convention of a national constituent assembly, elected by universal adult suffrage, to settle the future relations of India with British imperialism. A national constituent assembly will frame our constitution, and solve our fundamental problems of poverty and economic and social backwardness.

We call upon the All India Trade Union Congress, which is invited to the Delhi conference, to insist in the name of the organised workers that nothing short of a constituent assembly will satisfy them and to present to the conference the demands, political and economic, which the workers will make upon any swaraj government.

We call upon elected members of legislatures to show their devotion to the cause of independence by resigning their seats and on re-election refusing to take the oath of allegiance.

We call upon the whole nation not to be misled by interested communal propoganda, but to realise that the interests of all the oppressed and exploited are one, and to sink minor differences in the great task of obtaining freedom for all.

We call upon all who sincerely desire a mass struggle for freedom and for deliverance from poverty and ignorance

to join the Workers and Peasants Party which stands for the complete emancipation of all the people.

Our members must continuously conduct propaganda for the calling of a national constituent assembly, and warn the public of the dangers of a compromise arriving from the All Parties Conference and its exclusively bourgeois character.

Our members must utilise the situation for recruiting members to the party, the only guarantee of a proper policy for national freedom and the emancipation of the masses.

Party members must take part in the organisation of hartals and strikes on 3 February and must arrange a demonstration on that day with the following slogans:

Down with Imperialism and Simon Commission! Complete Independence! National Constituent Assembly! Votes for All! A Living Wage! The Eight-Hour Day! Land to the Peasants!

Meerut Record, P 833

Resolution of the WPP Bombay,  
29 January 1928

#### 4. STATEMENT OF R. S. NIMBKAR

The Simon commission was to land in Bombay on 3 February 1928. I was the secretary of the Bombay provincial congress committee then. As soon as I returned to Bombay from the Madras congress, I called a meeting of the BPCC to chalk out its program with regard to the boycott and the organisation of the hartal. A large sum of money was placed at the disposal of the propaganda sub-committee of the BPCC. Letters were written to various other public bodies to cooperate with the BPCC to successfully carry out the hartal. The Workers and Peasants Party offered its cooperation and all its prominent members were already in the BPCC as its members. A large number of meetings were held in various parts of Bombay for a fortnight prior to 3 February, the press reports of which I have

already put as defence exhibits. The BPCC also issued various handbills one of which is D 496T. The program for the day was fixed by the BPCC and a procession and meeting of the workers was one item in that program.

The Municipal Workmen's Union had taken a lead in this boycott propaganda amongst the workers. The majority of workers understood the political significance of this day. After 1922, this was perhaps the only occasion when the whole city observed a very successful hartal. But hartal is in itself a passive slogan. It means simple withdrawal from one's daily activities. The workers, we always maintain, are the leaders of the national revolution. The 3 February demonstration was a beginning of a new stage of development in which the masses entered the political field as an independent political force under the leadership of their own party and organisations. They marched in large numbers from one end of the city to the other, waving black flags, with red armlets, with the slogans of their class-demands such as, "Eight hours' working day!" and "Living wage!"

They attested their international class solidarity in the cry "Workers of the World, Unite!" In relation to the political situation, they had their banners with such slogans as "Down with British Imperialism!", "Nothing short of Independence!" and also proclaimed the necessity of convening a constituent assembly, elected on the basis of adult suffrage.

With these slogans on their banners, led by a placard bearing the name of "Workers and Peasants Party", the huge mass of the workers marched to their meeting place. They burnt the effigies of Baldwin, Simon, and particularly of Ramsay MacDonald, the high-priest of counter-revolution today.

I have already said that the whole program of the day was decided by the BPCC and the bills were paid by the same body. While dealing with this subject, I must put on record the various occasions when your Honour has stopped me and others from cross-examining some witnesses :

from different places in the country, when we wanted to show the all-India character of these demonstrations.

As regards the nationalists, I remember what the late Lala Lajpat Rai said, "We feel that any talk of complete national independence at the present moment, by our own efforts, is more moonshine. The practical politician in India directs his energies to a compromise with the British government on such a basis as may be profitable to both... But those negotiations the British government will not enter into. That is why I am wholeheartedly in favour of boycotting the commission."

This betrays the whole vacillating character of the bourgeois opposition to British imperialism. What we have said has come out to be true. It is only the real anti-imperialists, who are true to their principles, and rotting behind the prison bars.

Mærut Record, Statement of R. S. Nimbkar, PP 3046-48.

## 5. STATEMENT OF S. S. MIRAJKAR

I did participate and actively organise the Simon Hartal Day on 3 February 1928. I was also a member of the workers' committee formed to organise this hartal. The WPP of Bombay was to a large extent responsible for the successful demonstrations and meetings that took place in Bombay on that day. But for the party, the hartal would not have been stiffened and so actively organised as we did.

The Indian bourgeois politicians were, no doubt, at that time very much displeased with British imperialists because they expected to get a few seats on this royal commission; and had that happened the Indian bourgeoisie would surely have cooperated with the said commission. In that case the boycott and counter movement of that character would have been confined only to the petty bourgeoisie and the working classes. But because of the

mistake of the British imperialists in excluding the members of the Indian bourgeoisie on it, a temporary oppositional bloc was created; all political parties such as moderates, congresswalas, communalists joined in the boycott movement of this commission.

The WPP also was invited to join a boycott committee formed in Bombay of the representatives of all political parties; our party nominated Comrade Nimbkar and myself upon this committee. Sir Chimanlal Setalvad was the president of this committee and Mrs Sarojini Naidu was its secretary.

It must be made quite clear that although the WPP of Bombay cooperated with the other political parties, our differences were quite distinct. The extent of the "opposition" of these political parties to British imperialism was very limited, and they were quite willing to submit to the parliamentary commissions and committees which the British imperialists might appoint from time to time. It is because this commission was an "all-white commission", as they termed it, they opposed and boycotted it. Whereas the WPP the party of the complete independence of India, vigorously contented the claim of British imperialism and having pointed out that the British parliament has no right whatever to appoint such commissions any longer and that Indian masses must rise in revolt and be completely independent. This difference in the political outlook was very distinctly maintained in the whole Simon boycott agitation by the WPP of Bombay. This political line of the WPP was thoroughly appreciated by the petty-bourgeois and workingclass sections of Bombay who wholeheartedly and actively participated in the boycott demonstrations on 3 February 1932. In these demonstrations they carried banners such as "Down with Imperialism!", "Nothing short of Independence!", etc., and this is a clear proof of the appreciation of our political line. Witnessing these meetings and demonstrations of the workers, students, clerks etc., the Indian bourgeoisie became tremendously frightened at the political influence gained by the revolutionary WPP, and when the Simon commission returned again in the month

of October 1928 they decided to drop the boycott. There were other political causes for this action on the part of the Indian bourgeoisie, as a section of them was won over by the British imperialists with their usual policy of "divide and rule". But the main cause of dropping the boycott demonstrations against the Simon commission on the second occasion was to be found in their fear of the Indian masses going out of their control.

The WPP on 3 February 1928 called upon the workers to go on one day's political strike to demonstrate their will to overthrow the rule of British imperialism and to express their desire to be completely independent from the shackles of imperialist chains. And I may point out here that we very largely succeeded in achieving this object. The BCCI workers in the Parel workshop, the GIP workers in the Matunga workshop, the textile workers of Bombay, the municipal workers etc. joined in their hundreds and thousands and responded to the call of the Workers and Peasants Party. These workers walked several miles and finally joined in the meeting at Foras Road, arranged and organised by the hartal committee, which worked directly under the influence and guidance of the Workers and Peasants Party. In this meeting speeches were made impressing upon the workers the urgent necessity of being politically independent. I also pointed out to the workers how this commission composed of seven thieves was there to ensure the imperialist loot by making the Indian masses poorer. In the end, several effigies of the members of the commission were burnt, one of which was of Mr MacDonald who today has become the toy of the tory party in England. (FW 244 Inspector Patwardhan.)

In the petty-bourgeois quarters like Girgaon, the students' demonstrations and meetings were going on throughout the day and these too were organised by the members of the WPP in collaboration with the Bombay provincial congress committee, of which Comrade Nimbkar was the secretary, and the Youth League etc. In the evening there was a huge procession of students organised and led by the members of the WPP and the Youth League. Sir Chimanlal

Setalvad—one of the round-table knights—who was to preside over the public meeting at Chaupati, was frightened out of his wits at the tremendous mass demonstrations and other revolutionary activities throughout the day. He declined to preside over the public meeting at Chaupati and demanded the cancellation of the students' procession already arranged. Some of the weak-kneed congress leaders, such as Mrs Sarojini Naidu and Mr Nariman, tried to persuade the students to disperse the procession near the university grounds; but the influence of our political line among the students was so great that they defied the Congress leaders and marched in procession to the great chagrin and displeasure of this round-table knight. On the way the procession demonstrated in front of the offices of the *Times of India* and burnt the copies of the paper which had tried to ridicule the boycott movement that very morning. Ultimately, the procession did reach Chaupati where a separate meeting of the students was held and addressed by the members of the WPP.

The political influence of the WPP among the working masses of Bombay was very much strengthened from this day, and it went on increasing by leaps and bounds.

In this connection P.W. 215 Inspector Desai has produced the letter [P 1946 (I)], alleged to have been written by me and addressed to Sir John Simon when the commission returned in the month of October 1928. I do not want to admit this exhibit; but I want to say that it is nothing but the expression of opinion from the point of view of the masses of this country. Sir John Simon has publicly invited such opinions; and huge amount of communications were addressed to him as the boycott of this commission by the bourgeois political bodies was slackened down. This witness says that the private secretary of Sir John Simon handed over this letter to the CID. Even supposing that this letter was genuine I do not understand why it should have been handed over to the police.

**Meerut Record,  
Statement of S. S. Mirajkar,  
PP 1444-47**



## 6. MIRAJKAR'S PROTEST TELEGRAM AND LETTER TO JOHN SIMON

REVOLUTIONARY INDIAN MASSES ARE DETERMINED ACHIEVE COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE. THEY NO LONGER NEED EXPLOITING BRITISHERS IN THIS LAND. NO INQUIRY THEREFORE NEEDED. PLEASE STOP THE FARCE AND GO BACK TO ENGLAND. ALL THOSE THAT HAVE COME FORWARD TO COOPERATE WITH YOU ARE TRAITORS AND ENEMIES OF THE MASSES AND THEY SHALL BE PROPERLY DEALT WITH WHEN TIME COMES. THE CRY OF THE MASSES TODAY IS DOWN WITH BRITISH IMPERIALISM. DO NOT DELUDE YOURSELVES INTO BLIND BELIEF THAT THE KIKABHOYS, SHANKARANS AND OTHER CROWD OF KNIGHTS AROUND YOU HAVE THE LEAST INFLUENCE WITH INDIAN MASSES. THE BEST COURSE FOR YOU THEREFORE IS TO CLOSE YOUR INQUIRY FIRM IN INDIA AND ATTEND TO YOUR LUCRATIVE PRACTICE AT HOME. OUR FRANK OPINION ABOUT YOUR COMMISSION IS THAT IT IS A GANG OF ROBBERS.

12 OCTOBER 1928  
Meerut Record P 1946

S. S. MIRAJKAR,  
COMMUNIST

Sir,

Herewith I am sending you copy of a telegram I addressed to you yesterday. The Bombay telegraph office refused to transmit this message because they considered it objectionable as it contained the frank sentiments of the masses towards you and your colleagues in the commission. From this incident it will be quite clear to you how letters and telegrams containing praises showered upon you are promptly despatched and delivered to you and how telegrams expressing frank opinions about your commission are being suppressed.

This is how the reception of your commission is stage-managed by the bureaucratic executive and I shall be very much pleased if this letter together with the copy of telegram simply reaches you.

13 October 1928.  
Meerut Record, P 1946(1)

Yours truly,  
S. S. MIRAJKAR

### III. Critique of the "Nehru Constitution" of the All-Parties Conference

#### 7. AITUC REPRESENTATIVES TO ALL-PARTIES CONFERENCE

ALL-INDIA TRADE UNION CONGRESS

##### (A) N. M. JOSHI'S LETTER TO PHILIP SPRATT

I am sending to you herewith a copy of a letter from Mr Jawaharlal Nehru and reply to him. Do you think it possible for you to call a meeting of the subcommittee of which you are convener some time at Delhi before 12 February so that we may formulate some proposals before that date? As Mr Andrews points out we cannot in any manner commit the All-India Trade Union Congress before the executive council approves of these proposals and under these circumstances do you think it worthwhile to trouble the members of the subcommittee to go to Delhi on 12 February?

Yours sincerely,  
N. M. Joshi  
General Secretary

Bombay,  
25 January, 1928

##### (B) JAWAHARLAL NEHRU'S LETTER TO N. M. JOSHI

Dear Sir,

In continuation of my letter No. G. 2 of 28/1322 dated 2 January 1928, I am glad to inform you that the All Parties Conference which met at Benaras on the 15th inst. considered, besides the boycott of the statutory commission, the question of fixing a suitable place and date for the conference between the Congress working committee and committees of other organisations to draft a swaraj constitution

in accordance with the resolution adopted by the Indian National Congress at Madras. The conference after full consideration came to the conclusion that the second week of February at Delhi would generally suit the convenience of representatives of various organisations who will be attending the conference and accordingly fixed 12 February for the purpose. May I therefore request that you will make early arrangements for the appointment of your committee and for their attending the conference on Sunday, 12 February at Delhi. The exact hour and place of the meeting at Delhi will be announced later.

I shall be obliged if you will kindly intimate the names of your representatives to me at the address noted above.

Allahabad,  
18 January 1928

Yours sincerely,  
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU  
*General Secretary*

(C) N. M. JOSHI'S LETTER TO JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

Dear Sir,

I am in receipt of your letter dated 18 January 1928 asking the All-India Trade Union Congress to appoint a committee to meet the working committee of the Indian National Congress to discuss the question of the swaraj constitution, on Sunday, 12 February 1928. I have discussed this question with Mr C. F. Andrews, the president of the All-India Trade Union Congress, and he thinks that the executive council of the All-India Trade Union Congress must first formulate its views on the subject before its committee can authoritatively and usefully take part in the discussions with the working committee and he has asked me to call a meeting of the executive council on 26 February 1928. An earlier meeting is not possible as an earlier date is not convenient to Mr Andrews and may not also suit some of the representatives of the affiliated unions who are meeting in Delhi in the last week of that month. Under these circumstances we shall not be able to appoint a committee to meet your working committee on 12 February and discuss in an authoritative manner and in the name of the All-

India Trade Union Congress the subject of the "swaraj constitution".

The All-India Trade Union Congress has appointed a subcommittee to formulate a labour constitution for India. The subcommittee consists of the following: (1) Mr Chamanlal, (2) Mr N. M. Joshi, (3) Mr S. H. Jhabwala, (4) Mr P. Spratt, (5) Mr Kishorilal Ghosh, (6) Mr S. A. Dange, (7) Mr Dhoondi Raj Thengdi, (8) Mr M. Daud and (9) Mr G. Sethi.

The subcommittee has not yet met and I am unable to say when it will meet. But I may make one suggestion. If your working committee will have no objection I may request the members of this subcommittee to attend the conference on 12 February to hold a watching brief on behalf of the All-India Trade Union Congress and who may be permitted to take part in the discussion without committing the All-India Trade Union Congress to the views expressed by them.

Kindly let me know whether this proposal meets with your approval. If it does I shall request the members of the subcommittee to attend the conference at Delhi on 12 February.

Bombay  
25 January 1928

Yours faithfully,  
N. M. JOSHI  
General Secretary

Meerut Record, D 145 (22)

### 8. WPP (BOMBAY) OPEN LETTER TO ALL PARTIES CONFERENCE

(A) S. S. MIRAJKAR'S LETTER TO D. R. THENGDI\*

My dear Mr Thengdi,

I am sending you herewith a copy of the open letter

\* Date of censorship: 11 February 1928. Sender's name and address: S. S. Mirajkar, Bombay. Date of letter: 10 February 1928. Addressee: D. R. Thengdi, 229, Sadashiv Peth, Poona City.

addressed to the All Parties Conference at Delhi, to be held on 12 February 1928. Yesterday I sent you the resolution of TU movement passed at our last enlarged EC meeting.

The annual meeting fixed for 18 February 1928 had to be put off till some time in the first week of March because on the 18th and 29th there is the Maharashtra youth conference and on 25 February 1929 there is EC meeting of TU Congress at Delhi and some of our members will be going there to attend it; hence the postponement.

I am getting on with the work of the annual meeting. Nothing more at present to add. Are you going to Delhi?

Please acknowledge receipt of all the papers that I am sending you.

With greetings,

Fraternally Yours,  
S. S. MIRAJKAR

(B) AN OPEN LETTER TO THE ALL PARTIES CONFERENCE

Gentlemen,

The All Parties Conference meets at a momentous hour and faces a momentous task. The nation has shown by its reception of the Simon commission that it wants swaraj and is able and willing to fight for it. It has fought the first engagement, and won. It now waits expectantly for the next step. What that step is to be, whether it will lead us on to victory, or to defeat, or worse, to an ignoble compromise, depends upon you.

The nation demands what the British government will not grant independence, democracy, and the abolition of the evils of poverty and ignorance. Nothing but our strength will win these for us. Our aim must be political power, our strategy to rally and organise the whole might of the nation to bear upon the subject.

Our chief need is therefore a program, an authoritative statement of our aims and methods, that each man may know how and for what he is to fight and sacrifice. The time has gone when we can be satisfied with vague words. We must know that what we aim at is worth our efforts to

attain it. You propose to draft a constitution. We feel that far more is required. A program for the nation must have many planks, of which its future constitution may be one. And we must know how our program and constitution are to be put into practice.

Many of you seem to look upon the constitution as the central question of present political tactics. Is the constitution to be presented to the statutory commission? Or to the government? If so, it can be intended only as a basis for compromise, or otherwise why demand a "round-table conference"? If, on the other hand, the draft constitution is intended to be an ultimatum, why trouble yet again to prove that the government will not grant what we want? Or alternatively, why not more effectively rally our own forces by presenting for rejection our full program. But if we judge from the drafts which have appeared, you will be concerned, not with the legal and technical details of a constitution.

We shall raise a further question. Your conference consists of representatives of political parties, communal, commercial and similar organisations, and elected members of legislatures. We venture to say that it is no fit body to draft the nation's constitution or to lead its campaign for freedom. It is almost as unrepresentatives as the legislatures, which speak for 2 per cent in the name of the whole. Your conference will not even be able to achieve unity among the national institutions. The National Congress has voted for complete independence. If the decision is a serious one, how is agreement possible with those who will not demand separation from the British empire?

Nevertheless you are in a position to give authoritative guidance to the country. Our aim must be the attainment of political power and if you give the nation a real lead in that direction, you will be justified.

The nation requires a really representative and authoritative leading organ, which can rouse and organise the population as a whole, can draft its constitution, and begin the solution of the pressing economic and social problems

which confront it. The All Parties Conference, or the National Congress, must decide to convene a national constituent assembly which shall undertake these tasks.

The national constituent assembly must be elected by universal adult suffrage. No other basis will satisfy the people as a whole. It is deplorable that some of the draft constitutions already prepared contemplate a far more limited suffrage. If the people as a whole take part in the movement for independence and that is a condition for its success, their interests cannot be neglected. They must be guaranteed a democratic state completely free from foreign control, and full political rights including universal adult suffrage. They need freedom to organise and to express their views, by speech and in the press, the abolition of racial, caste and other discrimination, equality of the sexes, universal primary education, and further, guarantees of such elementary economic rights as a working day legally limited to eight hours, a legal minimum wage, nationalisation of the chief services and basic industries, and the abolition of feudal institutions, the despotic native states and the uneconomic system of landlordism.

This line of policy is the only one which can be successful in attaining what the nation requires—independence. And the All Parties Conference can give a lead in the right direction in only one way, by calling forthwith for a constituent assembly, based on universal adult suffrage to which the leadership of the future struggle shall be entrusted.

We are, gentlemen, your allies in the cause of complete independence.

9 February 1928

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
*Workers and Peasants Party*

Meerut Record, P 1831

**9. DRAFT OF "LABOUR AND SWARAJ"****(A) SPRATT'S LETTER TO SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Dear Comrades,

As convener of the subcommittee of TUC for drafting a constitution, I am circulating to the subcommittee members the proposals I have to make. If you are at Delhi for the executive council meeting on the 26th, I should like to discuss it with you there. If not, will you please let me know by letter what you think of this, and make any suggestion you have to bring forward, I have written to Mr Joshi proposing this procedure, instead of calling a special meeting of the subcommittee, at any rate for the present.

I enclose a statement of my proposal as to the function of the subcommittee. I think it is premature and useless for us to draw up a full draft of a constitution, but we may usefully make a statement defining the political policy and program of the Congress. I enclose also a rough draft of such a statement. The results of our work will have in any case to be submitted to the full congress, but I think that if reasonable unanimity is not obtained in the subcommittee, two—if possible not more—drafts should be submitted.

Yours fraternally,  
P. SPRATT

**(B) FUNCTIONS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE**

It is to be taken as granted that the ultimate object of the labour movement here, as elsewhere, must be the establishment of an independent democratic socialist republic, and the only kind of constitution it can agree to is that of such a state. The attainment of this ideal is only possible through the strength of the mass union organisations, primarily of the industrial working class, and secondly of the peasants, acting together, and a political party representing these sections. And it will obviously be attained against the will, rather than in agreement with, a large proportion of those represented by the existing nationalist parties. The



time when this is likely to be brought about is manifestly yet distant.

It is therefore at present impossible to draft a constitution which will be of any permanent value to the labour movement. We cannot predict in what circumstances labour will come into power in India, and what kind of constitution it will then be desirable or possible to establish.

It is also useless to put forward a constitution from our side with a view to modify the constitution which will now be produced by the nationalist parties. The gulf between the two, which is the gulf between the working class and the capitalist class, is in principle unbridgeable, and though working agreements on the basis of an anti-imperialist policy may be arrived at, no compromise as to ultimate aims is possible. We should not attempt to bring about minor modifications of their drafts, at the price of our political independence.

Finally, if we are concerned to do propoganda for our aims among the masses, we should not confuse the issue with the technical details of a constitution. A broad declaration of rights and a statement of our immediate political program is all that can be useful to us.

For these reasons I suggest that the subcommittee should take upon itself the responsibility of formally disobeying the Congress mandate to the extent of not preparing a complete draft constitution, but instead making a comprehensive statement of the political attitude and policy of labour.

The following is my suggested draft of such a statement, which I have called "Labour and Swaraj".

Meerut Record, P 545(1)

(C) DRAFT OF PROPOSED STATEMENT—  
'LABOUR & SWARAJ'

*Introduction:* It has long been felt necessary, in the trade union movement and outside it, that a clear attitude should be adopted by the organised labour movement towards

political questions generally, and particularly towards the central question of Indian politics, that of swaraj, or the relation of the country as a whole to imperialism and the other countries of the world. The progress of labour and of the nationalist movement, and recent developments in the parallel movements in other countries, render it impossible any longer to neglect this subject. In domestic politics the Trade Union Congress already takes a part. Its members are elected or nominated to the councils and assembly, and its views consulted in regard to legislation, while the tendency is developing for trade unions to participate directly in the political movement. The congress has been asked to take part in the All-Parties Conference for drafting a swaraj constitution. In the international field, representatives have regularly been sent to the ILO conference, relations with the British, Chinese and other trade unions are growing, and the congress has been approached for affiliation by the IFTU and the RILU. These often contradictory tendencies make it desirable, in the interests of the progress of the movement, to formulate its function and aims in general terms, so that a more consistent program and policy may be adopted.

*Aim of the Working Class:* The fundamental aim of the organised working class can only be, in the words of the presidential speech at the 8th Trade Union Congress, at Cawnpore, 'Nationalisation of land and industry, a civilised existence, a government of the workers, an economic system for the benefit of humanity—and peace'. More shortly, the function of the working class in history is the realisation of socialism. With almost complete unanimity the workingclass organisations of the world have accepted this as their aim, and from the earliest times, workers' movements have, with greater or less consciousness, pursued policies in keeping with it. The experience and sufferings of the working class under capitalism force it inevitably to demand and strive for the abolition of the anarchic, wasteful and unstable capitalist system, and its replacement by an ordered system, democratically controlled, and run for the benefit of humanity. Socialism must be the

aim of the working class, and all its efforts and policies must be subordinated to that aim.

*The Class Struggle:* The essential feature of the capitalist system generally is the private ownership of the means of production. The efforts of the working class under capitalism to improve its conditions inevitably develop into a struggle between the class of wage-earners and the class of property owners. The struggle, though at first waged only on minor and immediate issues, assumes eventually the magnitude of a struggle between the classes for the control of the means of production, and for control of the state power. The labour movement is the organisation of the individually weak and helpless workers for the prosecution of the struggle. Its aim is the attainment of control of production and of political power—socialism; its method is the class struggle against the capitalist class; the actual possessors of property and the state.

*Imperialism:* The Indian working class, in common with the working class of several other countries, is subjected to the special form of capitalism, imperialism. Imperialism consists in the investment of capital from an economically advanced country—Britain, in an economically backward country, India, for the more intense exploitation of its human and other resources. In order to supplement the diminishing return from its domestic capital, imperialism extracts a higher rate of profit from its colonial capital. This alone determines that the standard of life of the Indian working class is definitely lower than that of the working class of the imperialist countries, such as Britain. But in addition the Indian working class suffers from the conflict between the Indian and British capitalist interests for supremacy in regard to exploitation. For these reasons, no appreciable improvement in the lot of the Indian working class is possible under this system, and its first duty is the struggle against imperialism. Both its immediate and its ultimate aim depend for their realisation upon its success in the struggle against the economic and political domination of India by imperialism. The first condition for the establishment of socialism in India, and the relief of economic

exploitation and social degradation, is the abolition of imperialism, both as an economic structure, and as a political system.

*Political Aspect:* The two sides of the system cannot be separated, the economic and the political. Beginning in the economic sphere the class struggle inevitably develops to a higher form, the direct fight for political power. The working class must openly and avowedly adopt a political program, the essence of which must be the establishment of socialism through the destruction of imperialism and capitalism, and the assumption of state power.

*The Working Class in Politics:* The industrial working class is as a whole the most intensely exploited class, and its interests clash most sharply with those of imperialism and capitalism. It is, by its organisation and discipline, and its hold upon the strategic positions in the life of society, most able to wage the class struggle successfully. And its general political interests coincide with those of the great majority of the nation, which suffer, though in less degree, from economic exploitation, political oppression, and social and cultural neglect, at the hands of imperialism and capitalism. For these reasons the organised working class is destined for a leading place in the struggle of society generally for economic security, political democracy and social emancipation.

In this struggle the working class must ally itself with all forces and sections which will unite for the overthrow of imperialism. In particular it must establish the closest relationship with the peasantry, as was suggested in the resolution of the 8th Trade Union Congress on the 'council of action'. It will also find alliance in the National Congress, the anti-imperialist organisation of the middle classes. In so far as the National Congress conducts a real struggle against imperialism it must be helped by the working class.

*Workingclass Party:* For carrying out this policy, the trade union organisations of the working class alone will

not suffice. A definitely political organ must be created, with the policy and program here outlined. The Workers and Peasants Party, now developing in different parts of the country, fulfils the requirements of a genuine workingclass political party, and must receive the support of the Trade Union Congress, as was decided at 7th congress, Delhi, March 1927, and of the individual unions.

**Political Demands:** The workingclass stands in complete opposition to imperialism. It cannot therefore agree to the continuance of the British connection in any form. The Trade Union Congress must demand *complete independence*. It must further demand the complete establishment of a *democratic state*. This involves the abolition of all despotic feudal institutions, landlordism and the native states, and the granting of the rights of *universal adult suffrage, freedom of assembly, freedom of speech and press, the right to organise and to strike, and to carry arms*. The Trade Union Congress must demand further from the state, the guarantee of certain common rights of humanity, such as the abolition of caste and other discrimination, the equality of the sexes in regard to legal rights, wage-rates, etc. and universal primary education.

In the economic sphere, the state must guarantee for labour the standard legal eight-hour day, and the legal minimum wage, support for the unemployed, adequate compensation, protection, abolition of child-labour, etc. and as general measures, the nationalisation of the chief services and basic industries.

A government which will do these things alone can meet with approval of the workers and the support of the Trade Union Congress.

**Organisation:** The attainment of the program which the working class sets before itself depends solely upon the strength of the working class as an organised force. In addition to giving support to the workers political party, the trade unions must organise themselves for the struggle. The organisation must be as complete as possible—100 per cent trade unionism must be the aim, and experience shows

that this is best obtained by building the union on the basis of factory or shop committees. And it must be as effective as possible. Industrial unionism has already been accepted in principle by the Trade Union Congress, and this policy must be put into effect. Further, coordination of the efforts of the unions must be attained, nationally by the establishment of a strong authoritative executive council of the Trade Union Congress, locally by the establishment in every town of a trade council, to which are affiliated all the local branches of the unions. The trade councils must be in contact with the executive councils, and must act as its local representatives. Certain basic common demands should be adopted throughout the workingclass organisations, as a cement for its unity, and a fighting program to lead it forward. Such should be the eight-hour day, the legal minimum wage, state support for the unemployed, freedom of speech and organisation (and other general demands which have been repeatedly put forward by the Trade Union Congress).

*Policy:* (1) The strike is labour's chief weapon and it must be preserved and used. The right to strike must be jealously guarded, and the strike popularised among all workers as their greatest strength. Not only the ordinary strike with which all workers are familiar, but the sympathetic strike, often a most powerful weapon, and its development into the general strike, are to be regarded as means which labour must use for political as well as for purely industrial purposes. These require systematic propaganda among workers before they can be brought into effect.

(2) The adoption of a policy of struggle against imperialism demands politically as well as logically that the traditional cooperation with the government should cease. It must be forbidden for a member of any affiliated union to accept nomination by government to any legislature or committee. Similarly the congress should cease to appoint members for the delegation to the ILO conferences. The ILO was established and is supported by the capitalist government of the European states, and works in accordance with their imperialist policies.

(3) *International*: The international nature of capitalism generally, and the domination of the whole world by imperialism, demand that the struggle against imperialism be conducted on an international scale. The Trade Union Congress should cooperate to the extent of affiliation with such bodies as the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Conference (of colonial trade union movements) (Secretariat?) and the League against Imperialism. But more important is the question of the regular worldwide Trade Union International. The policy has been hitherto to refuse affiliation, until the proposed unity of the two internationals is effected. The propaganda and pressure for the unity of the two internationals must be kept up, but now that unity appears to be more distant, a decision as to affiliation is called for. The position and policy of the Trade Union Congress in relation to imperialism clearly demand that affiliation be made to the RILU rather than to the IFTU. A comparison of the records of the two internationals in regard to the colonial labour movements, and the question of unity between the two bodies, will dispose of any claim which the IFTU may put forward for the allegiance of the All-India Trade Union Congress.

July 1928

Meerut Record, P 545 (3)

## 10. DRAFT AITUC STATEMENT

### (A) SPRATT'S LETTER TO SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dear comrade,

You will remember that the last session at Kanpur of the All-India Trade Union Congress appointed a subcommittee, of which you are a member, to draw up a labour constitution for the future government of India. In February, I as convener circulated a paper, another copy of which is enclosed, containing suggestions as to the work of the subcommittee, and the draft of a statement on the political attitude of the Trade Union Congress, which was headed "Labour and Swaraj", (also enclosed), which I

proposed the Trade Union Congress should publish if it agreed.

I have received only one or two comments on this suggestion. One is to the effect that the proposed statement is entirely onesided, that is to say, it gives the views of only one party in the Trade Union Congress. I must reply that as it is a statement of political principles, such "onesidedness" is inevitable. In my view there are fundamentally only two schools of thought within the trade-union movement, viz that based on complete opposition to capitalism: and that based on acceptance of it. The many different shades of opinion resolve themselves ultimately into one or the other, or also attempt a necessarily illogical combination of the two. I have proposed a brief, but I think logically sound statement, with all that it implies, of the only view which I think the Trade Union Congress can conscientiously adopt, that of opposition to capitalism. But I must ask the other members of the subcommittee to give me their views, first on the question of the functions of the subcommittee, and then if necessary, on the statement.

I still am of opinion that a statement on the lines suggested should be published by the congress, but the situation has been altered by the appearance of the Nehru committee's report to the All-Parties Conference. The Trade Union Congress will clearly have to take up some attitude towards this report and the "Principles of the Constitution for India", and I think that it lies within the province of this subcommittee to prepare materials for the congress on the question. Fortunately we are not committed in any way. Some members attended, but mainly in other capacities. Mr Joshi was elected a member of the Nehru committee, but did not attend any meetings, or sign the report. We are therefore free to take up any attitude.

Accordingly I have drafted a statement, which is enclosed which I suggest should also be published. You will see that it proposes complete rejection of the "Principles of the Constitution", but suggests an alternative political line, and agreement with other bodies and sections on the basis of a common policy, complete independence, etc. It



is drafted also as a continuation of the general statement "Labour and Swaraj", but this, though I think it is desirable, is of course not necessary and small verbal changes could make it independent.

Again I must ask for the views of the members on this subject.

It is by this time clear that no meeting of the sub-committee can possibly be held before the next session of the congress, which will be held at the end of November. It is necessary to prepare and circulate all material of importance beforehand, so that a short meeting of the sub-committee may be held immediately before or during the Jharia session, and a report agreed upon quickly. But things have to be duplicated etc. and if the manuscripts are numerous or bulky this takes much time. I must therefore ask all members who have opinions, drafts, etc. which should be circulated, to let me have them at this address as soon as possible, when I will do my best to get them round to all members. Or alternatively, they would save me much trouble by circulating themselves. To any who wish to do this, I should state that Rai Sahib Chandrika Prasad was appointed a member of the subcommittee by the Delhi session of the executive council.

I am sorry that owing to delay in typing this is circulated far late than I intended.

2/1 European Asylum Lane  
Calcutta

6 December 1928

Yours fraternally,  
P. SPRATT

Meerut Record  
P 545 (3)

(B) DRAFT OF STATEMENT BY THE TRADE UNION CONGRESS ON THE  
NEHRU COMMITTEE'S REPORT AND CONSTITUTION

From this brief statement of the political position of the All India Trade Union Congress it will be seen that

the Trade Union Congress cannot give its assent to the draft "Principles of the Constitution for India" prepared by the Nehru committee for the All Parties Conference. The principal reasons for this are as follows:

(1) The ultimate aim which the Trade Union Congress, as representing the working class of India, must have in view, is the establishment of the socialist republic of India. However willing it may be to work and fight for aims nearer to realisation than this, it must retain the socialist aim as its ideal, and cannot finally commit itself to a constitution which would embody a merely bourgeois regime, however formally democratic. Though the Trade Union Congress can consider the findings of the Nehru committee and of the All Parties Conference as the basis for a temporary political agreement, they can in no way constitute its ultimate aim, and it must reserve its right to begin, on the realisation of that constitution, a struggle to transform it into that of a socialist state.

(2) If however the findings of the Nehru committee are considered simply as the basis for a temporary agreement between the Trade Union Congress and other bodies, they will be found, in view of the political principles of the Trade Union Congress, to be entirely unsuitable. The Nehru committee's report, and the political outlook of the Trade Union Congress, are entirely different and provide no basis for agreement.

The committee contemplates an advance solely by agreement with the British government, and without any real encroachment upon its privileges, to a constitutional status, "dominion status", which would apparently be entirely to its satisfaction or at any rate would provide for further peaceful advance to a satisfactory position. The representatives of the working class cannot agree with such a conception. The Trade Union Congress regards British imperialism as the possessor and protector within India of enormous economic and political interests, which the working class cannot possibly allow to remain in foreign hands, but which imperialism will fight with the utmost determination to retain. It must be pointed out that

the railways and other communications, and almost all the major industries of the country are effectively in the possession of British interests. However others may neglect this fact, the workers who are directly exploited (and the middle classes and peasants who are indirectly exploited) through these means, cannot overlook it. The Trade Union Congress would insist upon expropriation without compensation of all these industries and services by the government of independent India, and in fact it is evident that any Indian government which wishes seriously to be responsible to its people, or to be in any sense independent or free to act on its own initiative, would have no alternative but this.

The military forces in India are also in the same position. They are at present under the control of imperialism, and are used for imperialist ends of which the working class cannot approve. The Trade Union Congress had occasion to protest last year when troops from the Indian army were sent to be used against its fellow workers in China. There is also more than a mere possibility, while the troops remain under their present control, of their being used against workers and other sections of the population within the country. It is obvious too that a foreign-controlled army would constitute an intolerable menace to a government attempting any independent action. The Trade Union Congress would regard it as absolutely essential for a national government to establish complete control of all the armed forces in India.

On this question also it is clear that there is an irreconcilable difference of interest between imperialism and the people, in particular the working class of India, and the proposal to take over control of the army into Indian hands by peaceful or constitutional means is an absurdity. There can, therefore, be no question of peace or agreement in the evolution of India, and in fact British imperialism has consistently shown itself to be a merciless and implacable enemy, with which there can be no compromise. The Trade Union Congress looks forward to a period of increasingly acute struggle by the masses of the population

of India, in which the organised working class, because of its situation, will naturally play a leading part, against the forces of imperialism and its allies within India. This struggle cannot possibly be confined to constitutional channels, but must involve direct mass action. It can end only in the definite victory of the masses, the overthrow of imperialism, and the establishment of the complete independence of India.

The Trade Union Congress therefore considers that its present tactics should consist, not in drawing up a constitution for submission to the British government—that is of all policies the most futile—but in laying down the basis in a program of demands and action for an alliance of all those sections of the population of India which can agree to fight imperialism to the point of its complete overthrow.

The All Parties Conference committee on the contrary looks forward to a peaceful agreement with Britain, under which the complete independence of the country is not attained, British commercial interests are not in any way disturbed, and British control of the armed forces is perpetuated. Such a fundamental difference of outlook and interest clearly precludes any cooperation.

(3) Next to complete independence, with the necessary concomitants just dealt with, the Trade Union Congress demands a real democratisation of the country as a condition for its support of any program. However perfect a democratic scheme the committee may sketch, it is of course rendered valueless by the commission to base it upon the genuine independence of the country. No democracy can work under foreign domination, even if that domination is disguised and indirect.

But apart from this fundamental criticism, and its obvious logical consequences, such as objection to the presence of the king and of British officials nominated by him, etc., there are a few other objections, some of them serious, to be levelled at this part of the "Principles of the Constitution".

(a) The statement of "fundamental rights" would be improved by extra definition on the following points. Art. 4 para iv on the right of free expression of opinion, etc. should contain a definite repudiation of the proscription of publications on political grounds and of the censorship of mails. The labour movement is necessarily international in its outlook, but it finds under the present regime that its study of and intercourse with foreign labour movements is very seriously hampered, and in some directions almost entirely prevented, by these practices. It is moreover quite opposed to any real spirit of freedom or democracy that these things should go on.

Art. 4, para xv should contain an explicit assurance of protection of unions against civil liability for the acts of their members, on the lines of para xvi for criminal liability.

Art. 4, para xvii should contain a more definite statement of the economic measures to be carried through, eg the eight-hour day should be established, the unemployed should be supported by the state, etc.

Finally, there should be an explicit guarantee of the right to strike.

(b) It is to be regretted that the members of the committee did not follow their own inclinations and abandon all reservation of seats etc. on communal grounds. The importunities of the communal leaders are no doubt difficult to avoid, but probably the best solution of the communal problem is to ignore it. A very large part of the report, and of the discussion in the country, is devoted to this question, obviously to the delight of the British statesman, whose "challenge" to produce an agreed constitution was no doubt issued with the object of concentrating the attention of the Indian public upon this and similar unimportant questions, to the neglect of the real problems facing the country.

(c) The treatment of the subject of the Indian states is most unsatisfactory. The Trade Union Congress sees no reason in ordinary democratic theory, nor in any reading of present political or tactical necessities, why the report should advocate that the states be left under the rule of the prin-

ces: Not only the working class, but any democrat, must view with entire disapproval the obsolete and tyrannical autocracy prevailing in the states, and must demand its complete abolition. Further, the idea that any political advantage is to be obtained by taking up an equivocal or favourable attitude towards the princes, is surely absurd. The report itself remarks that the states are being turned into an Indian Ulster. The only way in which this imperialist move can be countered is by appealing to the populations of the states with a program of full democratic rights and absorption into independent India on an equal basis, and thus cutting the ground from beneath the princes' feet.

The Trade Union Congress has special grounds for taking up the cause of the population of the states. It is notorious that the conditions of the working class and the peasantry of the states are deplorably bad in almost all cases. "Begar" and other feudal abuses are still prevalent; the textile workers' unions have had occasion to complain bitterly against the extremely bad conditions, long hours of work etc., in the textile industry in Indore and Gwalior; the frequent occurrence of peasant disturbance in many states testifies to the misery and oppression from which they suffer; there is almost complete absence of political and personal freedom, and in this respect conditions are becoming worse (see the publications and memoranda of the Rajasthan Seva Sangha). Even the best states, which have made some progress in regard to education and representative forms of government, etc., shine only by comparison with the deplorable position of British India and the other states, and are in any case a hopeless minority. The Trade Union Congress feels strongly that in the twentieth century no case can be made out on any grounds for maintaining the existence of the states.

The Trade Union Congress regrets that it is unable to give support to the proposals of the committee, especially in view of the appeal for unity of all forces in support of them. It would of course be prepared to waive any of the detailed objections it may have to the report, except that on the subject of the states, which it considers very im-

portant. But the objection of the Trade Union Congress, as has been made clear, is not based on details or inessentials. Nor is it based on the necessarily socialist policy of the congress. It is quite clearly recognised that the first concern of any socialist organisation in India must be the establishment of the independence of the country, and that such an organisation must support any sincere and practical attempt to attain independence.

The opposition of the Trade Union Congress is due to the fact that the report of the committee aims at attaining not independence, nor even, as the report mistakenly claims, any status indistinguishable from independence. As has been made clear in para 2 of this statement, the difference between real independence and the goal aimed at by the committee is very far from negligible. It is all the difference between freedom and subjection. The report advocates the establishment of a status for India which is in no essential way different from the present. "India under dominion status will still be subject to British financial, commercial and industrial exploitation, to British military control, and therefore (as the report in fact admits by retaining the king as the nominal head) to British political control". In these circumstances all the apparatus of parliaments and democracy, universal suffrage and fundamental rights, are absolutely meaningless and valueless. The upper classes under such a regime might improve their position with respect to imperialism, and at the same time continue to use the imperial forces as a protection against the masses, but the position of the masses themselves would be absolutely unaffected. Only under complete independence, and with the abolition of foreign exploitation and dominance, can the masses hope to improve their position. The Trade Union Congress would be deluding its members and the masses generally, if, for the sake of the nominal concessions and freedoms of the report, or for the sake of a sentimental unity, it were to give its consent to such reactionary proposals.

On the other hand, the Trade Union Congress considers that the opportunity, provided by the present political

situation, for establishing a real popular movement for independence, based on an agreed program, should not be wasted. Instead, therefore, of the unrepresentative and exclusively upperclass. All Parties Conference, the Trade Union Congress advocates that there should be called together a really representative conference or constituent assembly of the people of the whole country, for the formulation and propaganda of program of popular demands and of mass action. The program suggested above (in the statement "Labour and Swaraj") would serve as a basis for this.

Owing to its social composition, and its obsession with legal conventions and forms at the expense of realities, "the All Parties Conference has failed to carry out its function of leading the people of India in a mass movement towards freedom, and has merely been the occasion for the reestablishment of unity among the bourgeois parties, on the basis of a most timid and reactionary program." The bourgeoisie have failed, but the masses still need their freedom. Such an assembly as that here proposed would, if properly prepared, meet with the immense response from the people, and would mean a great and decisive step forward for India.

#### 11. STATEMENT OF THE WPP BENGAL TO THE ALL PARTIES CONFERENCE ON THE REPORT OF THE NEHRU COMMITTEE AND THE DRAFT PRINCIPLES OF THE CONSTITUTION FOR INDIA

The Workers and Peasants Party of Bengal cannot agree to the "Principles of the Constitution for India" drafted by the Nehru committee of the All Parties Conference for the following reasons: (1) It disagrees with the majority of the members of the All Parties Conference in regard to the functions of the conference, and in particular dissented from the resolution of 19 May, whereby a



committee was appointed to draft the "Principles of a Constitution"; (2) even accepting the proposal to draft a constitution it objects to many parts of the draft produced.

(1) The disagreement of the Workers and Peasants Party with the resolution of 19 May, which was expressed at the time by the delegates from the brother party of Bombay, was for the following reasons:

(a) The function of the All Parties Conference was in the view of the Workers and Peasants Party to conclude an alliance of all possible forces, with a common program of demands and of action, for the attainment of complete independence. The time was, and is, most opportune for the adoption of this policy, and the interests of the great majority of the population clearly demand such a militant program as the Workers and Peasants Party contemplated, and a mass movement to enforce it.

The decision, on the contrary, to adopt the formula "full responsible government" with other resolutions of the conference including that to draft a constitution, constitute a complete abandonment of the real functions of the All Parties Conference, and a submission to the compromising policy and sectional interests of the liberals and other capitalist and landlord groups.

(b) The preparation of a constitution seemed to the Workers and Peasants Party to be a step designed to re-establish that cooperation with the government which had been abandoned in part during the boycott of the Simon commission, and thus to constitute not only a tactical error, but also a betrayal of the masses who were enthusiastically rallying and demonstrating in favour of the boycott. It was confessedly undertaken in reply to the "challenge of Birkenhead and others, who had obviously issued the challenge with the object of luring the Indian movement along the blind alley of so-called constitutional advance.

(c) The constitution to be prepared was clearly expected to be put into force by the British government. The view has been expressed that this constitution which is to provide a basis for peaceful agreement with Britain, should be looked upon as a final offer, which if refused, leaves

India no alternative but to embark upon a militant policy of aggression and mass action. An end must, however, be made at some point to "final" offers, and there is actually no likelihood that this will really be treated by its propounders as final. But in any case the British government has clearly shown that it will never peacefully come to any agreement satisfactory to India. And this statement, which is surely irrefutable, is a conclusive argument against the policy of drafting a constitution to be put into force with the consent of Britain.

For these and similar reasons, the Workers and Peasants Party objected to the proposal to appoint a committee to prepare a draft of the "principles of a Constitution".

(2) Nevertheless, now that the draft is prepared, the question arises how far can it be regarded as a satisfactory statement of the demands of the people and as a program behind which the masses can rally and for which they can fight? In the first place, it cannot suffice in itself. The demands of the masses, economic and social, go far beyond what any constitution can possibly provide. The All Parties Conference has made no attempt to tackle this question. Secondly, the draft, even so far as it goes, is in several respects extremely defective. The chief of these defects are here dealt with.

(a) The most important point of all is that it abandons complete independence. The arguments of the committee on this question (pp 1 and 21) show that the real significance of this point is either completely missed or intentionally neglected by them. "Dominion status" they declare (p 21) "has come to mean something indistinguishable from independence, except for the link with the crown. The real difference is indeed in the executive, in the real and not only in the technical sense, but it most certainly is not a negligible difference. On the contrary, it is enormous and vital. It is the difference between continued, though possibly veiled, subjection and exploitation of the masses by British capital, and freedom from that exploit-

ation and subjection. The committee by confining attention to legal forms, has obscured political realities. In theory there may be little difference, but in reality, the attainment of Indian independence would necessitate a struggle in which, among many fundamental changes, the complete expropriation of all British capital invested in India would have to be undertaken. And this alone, in the view of the Workers and Peasants Party, would constitute a status worth attaining. The most astonishing passage in the whole report is that on p 11 which assures European commercial interests that they have nothing to fear. In the view here maintained, even complete independence, if it could be had for the asking, and therefore subject to the maintenance of European commercial interests, would be only nominal independence, and would not be worth having.

It may be unnecessary to labour the point, but the Workers and Peasants Party attaches great importance to it. It is quite clear that a government which was really "responsible to the people of India" could not tolerate the absolute stranglehold which British interests at present have over practically all the industries and means of communication of the country. If the government were to attempt to do anything for the masses, or to assert its own authority in any way, it would have immediately to curb these interests. The far less extreme examples of Australia, the South American republics, etc. can be cited to show how dominions, or even independent states are in fact more or less completely subjected to foreign powers in control of their economic resources. None of these countries can be compared to India for the pitiable extent to which its vital and strategic economic machinery is in the possession of foreigners. Moreover, in the case of India, as opposed for example to China, the foreign economic interests are concentrated effectively in the hands of one power.

It appears to the Workers and Peasants Party dishonest to obscure facts as elementary and important as these, and to attempt to secure mass support for a program which, however superficially attractive, actually omits to deal

with what is perhaps the principal consideration of all. It is further hardly necessary to point out the implications of this, namely that the political future of the country suggested by the report is a totally unreal one. The peaceful evolution there contemplated can only mean the continuance under other forms of subjection and exploitation, and no selfgovernment worthy of the name. Any real freedom for India can only come as the result of revolutionary action and must take the form of complete independence.

(b) It will be clear from what has just been said that from the point of view of the Workers and Peasants Party, fundamental error vitiates the whole report, and that consequently much of the detail of the constitution is of little interest. If it is to be granted by the British government, that is, if dominion status is to be established, the details are unimportant. And on the other hand, if it is regarded as part of the constitution of independent India which has to be fought for, such points as the exact degree of autonomy of the provincial governments, the exact nature of the electoral machinery, and many other important questions can only be decided in the light of the political situation which will come about as the result of the struggle. It may be expected, for example, that the exigencies of that time will necessitate a far stronger central government, and less independence on the part of provinces, at any rate as a temporary measure. But no objection can be taken in principle to the idea of a great degree of provincial autonomy ultimately, nor to the redistribution of provinces in the way suggested.

The Workers and Peasants Party has little objection to the solution proposed to the communal question, but considers that it is allowed a quite excessive amount of attention. Experience tends to show that there is little communal feeling among the masses, except when it is artificially created, sometimes by honest fanatics but also by persons of suspicious antecedents, working against the national movement. Neither of these classes will be effected by facts, constitutions, or agreements and it therefore

seems better to avoid altogether the discussion which can only excite communal consciousness and to leave the solution of the problem to the growing national and political sense of the masses.

Many other details of the constitution are naturally objectionable, which follow logically from the erroneous assumptions made initially by the committee. The tone of loyalty to the British empire which pervades the whole report, the presence of the king, governor-general and governors, the conditional retention and the pensioning of the Indian civil servants, etc. cannot but be repulsive to every Indian. These things, though not in themselves of the first importance, will go to show something of what is implied by the initial false premises of the committee, and perhaps served to disabuse of these false ideas many who would otherwise tend at first sight to accept them.

On the other hand, universal adult suffrage is of course welcome, as is the statement of "fundamental rights". But at the same time the Workers and Peasants Party feels it necessary to say that in view of the general nature of the constitution, such rights may have little real value. Even if the members of the All Parties Conference seriously mean to insist upon them, and this may well be doubted, in view of the hostility which the British would undoubtedly show to many or all of them, and if they are incorporated in the constitution of the dominion of India, they may turn out to be of little use to the masses. As the example of Great Britain or indeed of almost any capitalist country shows, democratic right and nominal freedom can easily be rendered in practice almost entirely nugatory by an aggressive ruling class. Moreover, in the circumstances contemplated by the report, such a class partly Indian and partly British, would in fact be in possession of effective political power in the "commonwealth of India". Though, therefore, the Workers and Peasants Party welcome the pronouncement of the committee in favour of universal suffrage and very complete civil rights for the individual, it wishes to utter a warning against attaching great importance to the pronouncement.

(c) Two other points remain, which because of their importance require notice, and necessitate criticism of the report. The first is the question of the armed forces. In consequence of the fundamental error on the part of the committee already complained of, the question is treated in a most superficial and unreal manner. It is indeed an extremely difficult question, and one of the first importance, which will require the most earnest attention of India's leaders in future. Contrary to the view of the report (Sir Sivaswami Iyer's speech, p 13) it is essential for India to establish an army under its control. If India were to attempt to attain real freedom, it obviously could not leave the defence of the country to the British army, which would constitute its bitterest and most dangerous enemy. It must be emphasised again that Britain, owing to its so-called imperial commitments, regards its control of the armed forces of India as of no less importance than its control of her economic resources—indeed they are interdependent and would not permit in any circumstances any relaxation, gradual or sudden, of its complete military command. Again constitutional formalities seemed to have blinded the authors of the report to political facts.

It cannot be denied that the unarmed condition of India renders the question unusually difficult to solve, but that does not in any way render a solution unnecessary, and in fact the difficulty is not by any means insuperable. The question can obviously not be dealt with here, but one or two remarks may be made. The boggy of shortage of recruits, which is quoted in the report seems to be a hopeful rather than a discouraging sign. No intelligent and conscious Indian would enrol himself in a foreign army in which he may be called upon at any moment to shoot down the most patriotic of his countrymen. When India is independent, however, the question will be entirely different. There are many cases, that of China for instance, of the rapid creation of a highly efficient national army, which makes up in enthusiasm and the superiority of its personnel, for its deficiency in training and equipment.

(d) The other remaining question is that of the Indian

states. The treatment of this subject has also suffered from lack of political realism, and even from the narrow constitutional point of view is most objectionable. Whatever safeguards may be demanded as to the rights of the population of the states, the fact remains that the present rulers are expected to retain their power. This cannot be conceded by any true democrat. The population of the states must be put on exactly the same basis as that of what is at present British India, must be allotted to their proper and natural linguistic and administrative provinces. There can be no compromise with the intensely oppressive and reactionary feudal regime prevailing in practically all the states, and their existing rulers must be entirely swept away.

Even from the practical point of view, this program is wise. The report itself remarks (p 72) that no doubt is left in the minds of the authors "that an attempt is being made to convert the Indian states into an Indian Ulster..." It must be remarked that the analogy with Ulster may go further than the constitutional bounds which the report contemplates. It is well known that the central government, with far more sense of realities than the committee, is encouraging the raising and improvement of armed forces within the states. The national movement cannot establish alliance with the princes, most of whom are open loyalists, but on the contrary will find it valuable, and indeed necessary, to ally itself with the rebellious peasantry and discontented middle and working classes of the states.

For these main reasons, the Workers and Peasants Party of Bengal, objects to the "Principles of the Constitution for India" drafted by the Nehru committee of the All Parties Conference.

The adverse criticism which has already appeared in Great Britain has provoked some defenders of the constitution to threaten mass action to enforce it. The Workers and Peasants Party is of course always eager to throw itself into a mass movement for national ends. But it cannot commit itself to support of such proposals as these, which, as

has been shown, constitute an entirely inadequate and unsuitable program for a mass movement. The Workers and Peasants Party asserts, indeed, that the constitution is framed merely in the interests of the wealthy upper classes of Indian society, who have no intention of going beyond what the British government will grant, or of encroaching seriously upon the claims of the British commercial and industrial interests in India. Talk of mass action on the part of such classes is obviously a mere empty threat.

For this reason, the Workers and Peasants Party feels that no apology is needed for its criticism of the report and constitution in spite of the appeal for unity of all national forces behind the new program. Such unity would really be the unity of the nation behind the demands only of the upper exploiting "two-per-cent" of the nation; demands, further, which that section itself has not the power or determination to enforce in the event of serious opposition by the rival British exploiters.

On the other hand, the Workers and Peasants Party is anxious to establish the real unity of the nation behind demands which really express the needs of the majority. The real unity of the nation is the alliance of the exploited, cheated, browbeaten, unemployed middle class, with their even more unfortunate brethren of the working class and the peasantry. The demands which they will put forward will be for complete independence, in the real sense indicated above, real democracy, abolition of the Indian states and the almost equally oppressive and reactionary zamindari system and a real guarantee by the government of independent India to concentrate its attention upon the economic and social well-being of the masses, and to secure for them the elementary rights which all workers now expect.

Such a program will destroy the apparent unity of the political parties of India. But if consideration is given, not to parties, but to the classes which they represent, the justice and wisdom of this program will be seen. All the respectable and established parties represent one or other section of the small upper class, the "two-per-cent". Their



unity or disunity, their loyalty or disaffection, their cooperation or their boycott, mean, fundamentally, very little. What is important is to encourage the unity, the consciousness, and the action of the vast mass, the "ninety-eight-per-cent". This the All Parties Conference constitution will not and cannot do. And the failure of the All Parties Conference even to attempt this urgent task of leading a mass movement against imperialism, marks the final retirement of the bourgeois parties from the arena of national politics and their collapse into abject submission to imperialism.

As opposed to this arbitrarily selected and essentially unrepresentative conference, the Workers and Peasants Party suggests that a campaign should immediately be undertaken for calling together a constituent assembly for all India, elected as far as possible, by universal suffrage, or by some alternative but properly representative method, which shall have as its object not merely to prepare the constitution for the independent republic of India, but to formulate practical demands for rallying the masses to the struggle to put that constitution into effect. The facts must be faced that the constitutional methods and timid demands of the upper classes will no longer procure any tangible benefit for India and will no longer secure the support even of the middle classes. A policy of mass action behind a program of mass demands, such as are here outlined, is alone sufficient for our purpose.

Meerut Record, P 904.

## 12. LABOUR AND FUTURE CONSTITUTION FOR INDIA

(Text of the resolution adopted by the Jharia session of AITUC—18 December to 20 December 1928)

(a) This congress formulates the following basis for the future constitution of India to be placed before the All Parties Convention to be held at Calcutta on 22 December 1928 and the subsequent days, as our demands.

(1) Socialistic republican government of the working classes.

(2) Abolition of Indian states and socialistic republican government in those places.

(3) Nationalisation of industries and land.

(4) Universal adult franchise.

(5) Free compulsory primary education.

(6) Freedom of speech.

(7) Right to work and maintenance and provision for social and unemployment insurance including maternity benefits.

(8) Nonenactment of repressive and reactionary labour legislation should be guaranteed.

(9) Protection of general labour interests.

(b) This Congress elects the members of its constitution committee, one member from each affiliated union and Mr R. R. Bakhale—the total not exceeding 50—as its delegation to the All Parties Convention to be held at Calcutta and instructs it to present the above program to the convention and take no further part in its proceedings if that program is not accepted.

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## IV. The "Assembly Letter" and the Controversy Round It

### 13. "ASSEMBLY LETTER"

Dear Comrades,

During this year, while I was away, several letters from individual comrades came. They contained a number of serious questions concerning the situation at home. The comrades, who were in charge of things in my absence, provisionally answered to those questions. On my return I carefully read all the letters, reports, and other valuable materials. I did not write any earlier immediately on my return, because I wanted to get intimately acquainted with the state of affairs before expressing my considered opinion. Besides, some of the questions being of serious political nature demanded mature consideration and consultation with other comrades. Now I am in a position to write to you on all the questions raised.

As introduction I desire to make certain things clear. This is particularly in reference to remarks made in the letters of Edward written in January and August. I can understand his bitterness; but the personal tone is deplorable. Such tone would only justify the charge "bolshevik agent" made by our enemies. Edward puts the question as if the comrades at home were charged by us abroad with some work the accomplishment of which would benefit or even aggrandise us: and that our failure to respect some moral contract tacitly made, landed the comrades at home in endless difficulties. Starting from this erroneous conception of our relation, Edward makes the astounding statement that "unless you mean business seriously, we are not going to be exploited by you as hitherto". We "mean business"

as seriously as anybody, but there seems to be some difference as regards the nature of the business. I take it that difficulty of the situation overcame Edward, making him say such things. Nevertheless things must be spoken out any possible misunderstanding must be removed if we are to work together as we all desire and must. Therefore let me begin with a few words as regards our relation and the basis of collective work.

Our relation is that of comrades agreeing on the principles and program of a revolutionary struggle for freedom. This agreement leads us in one party. Our collective task, therefore, is to organise a party that will lead the struggle for the realisation of the principles and program we all subscribe to. This task has not been imposed upon us by anybody from outside. It arises out of the conditions in India. The Indian workers and peasants must struggle for freedom, must have their political organ to lead this struggle, irrespective of any help or stimulation from abroad. Indian workingclass movement must have international affiliation because a revolutionary struggle against capitalism cannot be conducted successfully in national isolation. International solidarity, which is expressed in organisational relations, is a political necessity. Any other benefits resulting from it are secondary. The International can help the Indian working class only when they help themselves; and this the Indian working class are doing admirably. As the conditions inside India demand the growth of a workingclass party, everything required for this purpose should be available mainly and essentially inside the country. Any aid from outside can be only supplementary. Otherwise the party will be an exotic affair without any organic relation with the situation it must operate upon. So, you in India are not doing a job set to you by us abroad; both you and ourselves feel the necessity for a workingclass party, and are contributing our respective quotas in founding and building it up.

Now let us proceed to the subject matter of this communication. The subjects to be dealt with are: (1) Orga-

nisation of the parties (CP & WPP, their relation etc.); (2) international affiliation; and (3) coordination of the activities of the party in the country and its emigrant section.

1. There seems to have been some confusion about the existence of two parties. Some comrades at home appear to think that the formation of the WPP means the liquidation of the CP. It is not true. We do not propose the liquidation of the CP. On the contrary, we are of the opinion, and this opinion is supported by the International, that in the period of history the working class can fight for freedom only under the leadership of the CP. Even the national revolution in its last stages will not have any other loyal and resolute leader than the CP. This has been proved by the experience in China. A real struggle against capitalism can be conducted to the final victory only by a party which is guided by the revolutionary principles of Marxism and Leninism; and such a party is the CP. Imperialism being the most highly developed form of capitalism, national revolution in the colonies is essentially a struggle against capitalism. Therefore the driving force of the national revolution must be the proletariat under the leadership of the CP. Having this view of the situation, since 1920 we have worked for the organisation of the CP in India and the International has supported this effort of ours. So on the question of the necessity of the CP there is no difference. The difference appears to be in the method of forming the CP. Some comrades at home seem to believe in the possibility of organising the CP legally. We do not share this belief. The experience of the last seven years substantiates our opinion. We do not propose selfliquidation; but are opposed to legalist deviation which will render the CP a harmless nominal entity unworthy of repression.

In this connection I must refer to the letter of Edward which contains dangerous views as regards the organisation of the CP. I take it that Edward represents the opinion of a group of comrades. He maintains that the *Masses* (in its articles exposing Satyabhakta's "CP") was not correct in

saying that the accused in the Kanpur case were sentenced as communists. In Edward's opinion they were condemned not as communists, but for making preparations to "wage war against the king". The conclusion of this argument is obvious: A CP can exist legally in India if it abstains from the preparations to "wage war against the king". That is, legality can be had at the expense of the very *raison d'être* of the CP. Is not it too dear a price to pay? The advocates of legalism base their argument on the famous statement of the prosecution counsel in the Kanpur case: "The government has nothing against communism as such." But this very statement strengthens our case. The government has nothing against communism as such, but will not tolerate its least application to practice. This was borne out by the Kanpur case, Satyabhakta's show and our legal CP. In the Kanpur case our comrades were convicted because they were alleged to have tried to apply communism to the Indian situation. There was no evidence to prove that they otherwise tried to wage war against the king. Satya's show was tolerated and patronised, from behind the scene, because in addition to other pernicious purposes, it served the purposes of creating the atmosphere of "legal communism". Finally, our CP is ignored because of its remarkable inactivity. The moment it proposed to have even a conference, it attracted the attention of the police. A communist party is not formed by a number of individuals declaring themselves communists. It is done in actions first for the propagation of communist principles and program among the masses, then organising those subscribing to those principles and program in fight for the realisation of those principles and program and then again leading the entire working class in every stage and form of the struggle leading up to, and creating conditions for the overthrow of capitalism and establishment of socialism. The proletariat and peasantry will not follow the communist vanguard, will not have confidence in them, will not outgrow the influence of the bourgeois and reformist leaders, unless the communist vanguard can place themselves at the head of everyday struggle of the workers and peasants, support

their immediate demands, show them in actual struggle that the realisation of the smallest demands of working class is closely connected with the broad issues of national and class struggle. The communists will become the trusted leaders of the masses by giving concrete form to the latter's unconscious demands. In the earlier stages of the class struggle the workers and peasants do not know clearly what they want. The struggle for the freedom of the working class cannot be postponed till every worker has acquired class consciousness, which can be developed only in actual struggle. The majority of the peasants do not know the reason of their misery. The communist must go to them and explain to them how they are exploited, tell them what they want to liberate themselves from the present condition and lead them in the struggle for the realisation of their requirements. He must place before the peasant the slogans: abolition of landlordism, reduction of rent and taxes, annulment of the agricultural indebtedness, etc. Then the peasantry will enthusiastically enter the struggle knowing what they are fighting for and will follow the communist as their leader. Similarly in the towns the communist must place before the proletariat a program of action corresponding to their immediate demands and tell them that their role is to overthrow capitalism. In India the communists must place the question of national independence as the precondition for the realisation of the minimum demands of the working class and lead it in the fight for national freedom as a step towards the realisation of socialism.

Can these be done without incurring the wrath, not only of the imperialist rulers, but also of the native bourgeois? No. Before the communists have taken two steps in this direction of organising their party, the narrow limit of "communism as such" will be exceeded, and they will find themselves "waging war against the king". If they do not act in this direction, they will never organise the struggle against capitalism and will never realise socialism.

With these considerations we do not share the illusion that a CP can be organised in India legally. But as men-

tioned above, we are not in favour of selfliquidation. Fight for legal existence but build up a powerful underground organisation. Preserve your legality as long as you can, but don't have it at expense of activities essential for the growth of the party. The existence of the CP should be known, every worker and peasant must know it but don't emasculate the party with the banal and cowardly doctrine of bourgeois nationalism that all our activities are overboard, we have nothing to hide. Every little act of a real communist is a blow to imperialism, and the imperialism knows it; therefore if the communist does not act illegally, he must pass his life in prison. There is no "fair play", no gentlemanliness in the revolutionary struggle.

How to organise an illegal party? I am afraid that the failure to answer this question contributes to the dangerous legalist deviation. Political party is a comparatively new thing in India; and there prevails a rather faulty idea about it. An illegal organisation is traditionally associated with terrorist conspiracy, bombs and revolvers. It is not understood how a party can be illegal and carry on political activities. It is thought that if the CP is illegal its very name should not be known to anybody. A political party is confounded with secret conspiracy. Forced underground the CP will not make a secret of its existence. Not in the least. On the contrary, through literature, journals, manifestos, declarations, appeals on every event touching the life of the workers and peasants, printed and circulated conspiratorially, the existence of the CP will be made known to every worker and peasant. The program of the party will be published. Members will be recruited. Central and local organisational conferences of the party will be held whenever necessary. Every member of the party will actively and openly participate in labour and peasant movement also in the revolutionary nationalist struggle as communist, under the guidance of the party, according to the program of the party; only it will not be publicly known that he is a communist. Communist nuclei should be formed in every factory. Thus organised the CP will not altogether disappear from the political scene, leaving the



ground free to imposters like Satya as some comrades fear will be the effect if the CP were illegal. It will continue to function, carry on its propaganda, participate in every department of the political life of the country. Not known publicly as such, the communists will not be liable to arrest any time. The police will not know where the headquarters of the CP are to be raided any moment. The names of the members of the central committee should not be published so that they can be arrested on any pretext.

The Workers and Peasants Party, undoubtedly a party, develops more quickly and wields a much greater influence if it can function legally. Illegality is specially disadvantageous in India where the working class is largely illiterate, and therefore, the propaganda must be carried on mainly orally. Besides, in India the task is to organise and lead a mass movement. It is almost impossible to do it without legal possibilities. Therefore we propose the formation of the WPP through which the communists can function legally, through which agitation and propaganda can be carried on legally, and the workers and peasants can be organised to defend the interest of their class.

But the WPP is not and should not be merely a legal cover for the CP. In that case it would only be change of name to deceive the police; it would not be necessary to have two parties, there should be only one party with a legal and an underground organisation. We proposed the formation of the WPP as a much broader organisation. It should be the rallying ground of the exploited social elements (proletariat, peasantry and petty-bourgeois) which must unite themselves in a revolutionary struggle against foreign imperialism and native reaction, the elements that must participate in the struggle for the creation of such political and economic conditions as will help the proletariat in its further struggle against capitalism. The communists should be in the WPP and by virtue of their being the conscious vanguard of the working class will be the driving force of the party. But the WPP is distinct from the CP in that its program is not a communist program, its

program is the program of democratic revolution which includes the realisation of the minimum political and economic demands of the workers and peasants. *The CP supports this program as its minimum program.* The main points in the program of the WPP are overthrow of imperialist domination; direct or indirect establishment of a democratic state with full political right for the workers and peasants; nationalisation of land (abolition of landlordism, native states and other feudal remains), land tax not exceeding 15 per cent of the net income, exemption from taxation for poor peasants cultivating "uneconomic" holdings, annulment of agricultural indebtedness; control over usury (interest not to exceed 5 per cent), cheap agricultural credit; nationalisation of means of transportation and basic industries (mining, iron and steel); 8-hour day and 44-hour week; minimum wage, guaranteeing a fixed standard of living, specific improvement of labour and housing conditions; free primary education; insurance against unemployment, sickness, old age, the state and the employers' contributing 75 per cent to the fund; workers' committees in the factories and peasants' committees in the villages to enforce the program; freedom of press, speech and assembly; right to strike and carry arms; freedom of religion and worship, equal political and economic rights for women.

The social elements ready to fight for this program are not all necessarily communists and never will be communists; but organised in the WPP they will be under the influence of the proletariat and be led by the CP without subscribing to its program of socialism.

The gradual decomposition of the bourgeois-nationalist parties creates conditions very favourable for the rapid growth of a party with such a revolutionary program. Sincerely revolutionary petty-bourgeois elements, particularly the declassed intellectuals, will before long rally to the WPP, which will thus provide the CP a very broad base of operation in order to strike root in the worker and peasant masses.

The present form of its organisation obstructs the deve-

lopment of the WPP. It is too openly identified with the CP. This keeps away from it many revolutionary elements who would join it on the above program. It is publicly known that practically all the members of the CC of the CP are the leaders to the WPP. Of course, in fact it should be so but the cat has been unnecessarily let out of the bag by publishing the list of the CC of the CP. This mistake must be rectified as soon as possible. It can be given that a conference of the CP has been held to discuss the present political situation; among other things, the conference has elected a new CC of the party. So legally the comrades who by virtue of the list published by the party, are known as members of the CC of the CP will cease to be so, although they may actually continue to be the members of the CC of CP. In fact such a conference should be actually held to discuss the questions of propaganda, organisation, tactics in the political situation created by the boycott of the RC and the left orientation of the TUC, the organisation of the WPP and international affiliation. In the present political situation, the CP must show some sign of life at least by issuing a manifesto in which an analysis of the situation from the point of view of the working class should be given, together with concrete propositions as regards the development of the anti-imperialist struggle. I shall send a draft of such a manifesto shortly.

In the organisation of the WPP, simultaneously with the mistake committed as a result of legalist deviation as regards the CP another mistake is also committed on the other extreme. In Bengal, for example, the WPP tries to accommodate landlords with the communists. Naresh Sen Gupta certainly does not agree with the program of the WPP. His articles in the *Gana Bani* are the evidence of his disagreement. The views contained in those articles should not find place in the organ of the WPP if this should be what we desire it to be. Still Naresh Sen Gupta was the president of the party and now has been succeeded by another landlord, Atul Sen, members should be admitted in the party not on the payment of some donation, but full agreement with the program of the party. Otherwise, there

never will be any party. Financial difficulties do handicap the growth of the party but such mistakes on either extremes are more responsible for the stagnation of the party.

A political party is the organised vanguard of a class. It can grow politically and numerically only by drawing in its ranks the politically-developed and socially-conscious elements of the class it represents. Adhesion of a few known persons as leaders does not make a party. The party must have members. Both the CP and WPP are very deficient in this respect. They must recruit members from the proletariat and those declassed intellectuals fully and unconditionally identifying themselves with the proletariat. The WPP should recruit members from the workers and peasants masses, as well as from the revolutionary petty-bourgeois nationalists subscribing to its program of revolutionary democracy. Each of the present members of either parties must be given the task of recruiting, say in three months, at least 10 new members in case of the CP and 50 in case of the WPP. Arrangement should be made for the education of the new members about party principles, program, organisation, etc. Then they, in their turn, should be given the task to recruit further members. Thus the party must be built, laying one brick upon another, so to say.

The party of the working class is not the same as the nationalist parties which are amorphous organisations of agitation, but not fighting organs which the party of the working class must be. Strict adherence to the program, constant participation in the struggle for the realisation of the program, political and organisational discipline—these are the conditions of membership of the workingclass party. Every member should daily perform a definite party work, recruiting new members, circulating party organs and other literature, agitation, propaganda in the TU, in the peasant movement, etc. Payment of party due and purchase of party organ are obligatory for each member.

An essential difference between the CP and WPP is in the form of organisation. While the former can have only indivi-

dual membership, the latter will have individual as well as collective membership. TU, peasant organisation, etc. should be affiliated in the WPP. Then the communists will carry on propaganda inside these affiliated bodies and recruit individual members for the CP. The communists in each WPP organisation must work as a compact group under the direction of CC of the CP.

It is high time for the WPP to have a national organisation and a national CC. The situation is very favourable to convene a congress for the formation of the WPP on the national scale. The agenda of the congress will have the following questions: (1) The political situation, and the task of the workers and peasants; (2) program of the party; (3) constitution of the party; (4) organisational tasks; (5) international affiliation; and (6) election of the CC. The discussion of the first point will lay down the necessity for the organisation of a political party of the workers and peasants to conduct the struggle for the promotion of their class interest which demands the overthrow of imperialist domination over the political life of the country; the WPP will, therefore, take a leading part in the fight for national freedom and in this will cooperate with other parties carrying on the similar struggle. The outlines of the program are given above. The main points in the constitution are: workers and peasants, and those fighting for the realisation of the minimum political and economic demands of the workers and peasants, as formulated in the party program, are eligible, for membership; collective membership; entrance into the National Congress as an independent political party with full right of criticism. The international nature of class and anti-imperialist struggle should be recognised and on this basis the WPP should declare its affiliation to the League against Imperialism. A CC of say 11 or 13 members should be elected as the supreme organ of the party till the next congress. TU leaders under communist influence should be elected as the CC. Men closely connected with peasant movement with revolutionary outlook should also be there. Finally, petty-bourgeois revolutionary nationalist leaders with influence upon the masses

and subscribing to our program should also be drawn in. Making room for all these auxiliary elements, the communists must have the majority on the CC of the WPP. Otherwise there is no guarantee that it will develop in the right revolutionary direction. The congress should also elect a delegation of 3 to the next world congress of the League against Imperialism.

1. *The Party Press*: It is the main instrument to build up the party. Special attention should be devoted to it. The papers published should be conducted as organs of the same party and not as personal organs. I am obliged to give this warning because judging from his letters, Edward considers the Calcutta paper as his personal business. We must all appreciate what he has done to keep up the paper which is a good paper generally, but he must also know that he has done this for the party. We know the difficulty with which the papers are run; but he puts the question not in the correct way. He says: "Help me keep up the paper, and I will publish stuff sent by you." The papers belong to the party, must be kept up by the collective effort of the party and must be run collectively by the party. We must have international support, but unless the basis is found inside the country, the whole thing will be hanging in the air. The circulation of the paper must be built up. To write a good paper is not enough. It should be placed before those who must read it. And those who will be interested in the paper must pay for its upkeep. Our party press built up on this principle, applied in practice with the necessary international support will rapidly develop and be a powerful factor in the political life of the country. But it should be built not from the top but from the bottom. Then the paper must be written, keeping in view the nature of the readers we want to reach. For example, the Calcutta paper does not observe this condition. It is full of articles written more for Tagorian literature effect than for saying something to the workers and peasants. This must be changed if the paper is to be put on its own feet. Then the party press must be centralised. All the papers, irrespective of the language and province they are pub-

lished in, should be conducted with a common program—the program of the party. Apart from materials dealing with the local events and conditions, all the party organs must publish some general articles sent out from the party headquarters, contributions from members of the emigrant section of the party should be likewise dealt with.

A central organ of the party is necessary. But the question can be raised practically only after a national centre of the party is created. Meanwhile the ground can be sounded. The paper obviously must be in English containing stuff that will be reprinted in translation by the provincial organs. I am afraid that we lack sufficient force to undertake such a task immediately. The main difficulty is not financial. It is political. We will have great difficulty in finding suitable editor and contributors to such an organ. There is no use of adding to the Indian press one more paper which will not strike out clearly a new way and will maintain constantly this position. Therefore, in our opinion, it is not necessary to be in a hurry about it. Look over the ground, find the political forces required, explore the possibility for raising part of the finance in India, then we will see.

2. *International Affiliation:* On this question there has been confusion and uncertainty. Let us make it clear once and for all. As far as the WPP is concerned, the question is answered; it should affiliate itself with the League against Imperialism. That will serve our purpose. Through that you will have the relations and aid you need; but you will not be condemned of having connection with M. It is politically important also. Up till now the League has its relation with India through Jawaharlal Nehru. The connection with the League has done him some good as indicated by his action in the Madras congress. But we need not entertain much illusion about him. The League must have relation with the revolutionary organisations. Comrade Jhabwala is already in correspondence with the League. The WPP can eventually become the recognised organ of the League in India. A delegation to the League will give

us opportunity to have a meeting to discuss all our problems, political, organisational, financial, technical.

The CP must unquestionably be a section of the CI. It is practically treated as such, but no formal request to this effect has as yet come from our party in India.

Up till now the CI has acted upon the affiliation of the emigrant section of the CP of India. In the conference of the CP suggested above the question of international affiliation should be decided, clearly passing a resolution on the affiliation and this resolution should be communicated to the latter. As the CP will be underground, declaration of its affiliation to the CI will not harm it while its status as the section of the international organisation will be clearly and formally established. The political significance of the affiliation should be clearly understood. By this act, Indian communists organised in a party will become integral members of a centralised world party, placing themselves under its supreme direction. International affiliation should not be interpreted only as the means of getting material aid for the movement in India. There is reason to fear that our comrades in India do not fully appreciate the implication of international affiliation. For example, in a resolution of the last conference of the party, it was stated that the Indian communists were communists without being recognised by any foreign organisation as such and did not want to be dictated by any foreign organisation. This statement might have been influenced by the attitude of Saklatvala and Camp[bell]. Nevertheless it indicated a wrong conception of international affiliation. Either the CP of India is a section of the CI or not. If it is, then it must have the same status, right and obligation as all the other sections, and there are 62 of them. The CP of India cannot enter the CI with special privileges, "extra territorial rights" so to say, but no obligation, no discipline. You cannot only demand material support and refuse to abide by the program and directions of the mightiest world organisation. I put to you the question frankly and hope you will make a clear decision.



A communist party must be an organic part of the world communist organisation. It cannot be otherwise and call itself communist. Those who smell "foreign dictation" in this organisation principle of a body that carries on a relentless struggle throughout the world, are not communists. They do not understand the ABC of Marxism and Leninism and have faulty conception of the international nature of class struggle.

In this connection, a few words about your conflict with Sak[latvala] and Camp may be said, although the episode can be taken as closed. The proposals made by them as regards affiliation with Minority Movement and instructions from London did not have the sanction of the CPGB or the CI. Those propositions were in violation of the organisational principle of the CI which are fully adhered to by its British section. Neither did the suggestions of Camp as regards your connection with me have any authority. Those were his personal opinions and should be dismissed as such. The centres in Berlin and Paris are the agencies of the CI to look after the Indian affairs. The CP of India will have its relation with the CI through those centres and not through London. Any British comrade that may come to India, comes to work there under the supervision, and in accord with the CC of the CP of India. He has no superior right unless he comes with a mandate from the CI as its representative. No such representative has as yet been sent to India. So you know the position.

*The Representative of the WPP:* Some months ago, a representative of the Bengal WPP arrived in M. Edward will tell you who he is. He is still there in the International Lenin School on his own desire. He came as the representative of the party, but to everybody's surprise, acted as he wanted personally. Firstly, he could give the International very little information; secondly, he had no definite instruction from the party, nobody knows why he came; thirdly, he is a member of the CC of the CP (although he is no communist) but was not in a position to say anything as regards the international affiliation of the

party; fourthly, his whole behaviour towards the Indian communists was very reserved, not friendly and comradely; fifthly, he refused to return home to report to his party over the result of his visit to the International and declared that his plan was to stay half a year in Europe, studying all sides of the situation; sixthly, he maintains relations with all kinds of people on the plea that a communist need not be isolated; seventhly, only he stated that he can rely more upon the materials got from social-democratic sources than from the communists because these are prejudiced while the former are more objective. So on and so forth. Nevertheless we have induced him to join the Lenin School hoping that some political education and ideological understanding may change his attitude. Your relation with the International certainly will not improve by sending such representatives. We hope to welcome some real representative soon and that meanwhile you will send some instruction to the present incumbent, if he really represents the party. Another suggestion is that he should be removed from the CC of the CP if not altogether from the party.

3. *Coordination of Our Activities:* Indian communists in emigration are members of the CP of India and are automatically members of the WPP. We expect to be treated by the comrades at home as such. We should not be looked upon as outsiders who could serve you only as financial agent. As members of the same party nationally and internationally, we must coordinate our efforts. It is not only in the case of India that a section of the party is forced to be in emigration. The centre of the Russian party till the revolution was abroad. Our respective efforts can be coordinated as follows:

*Foreign Bureau:* It will be the organ of the CP abroad as was decided by the last conference of the party. Uniting in itself the representation of the CP and the agency of the CI it will be the most competent organ through which the relation between the two will be maintained and the latter will direct the former. Of course, the exist-

ence of the FOREIGN BUREAU and its functions do not preclude the representation of the CP directly in the headquarters of the CI and a representative of the latter visiting India when necessary and convenient. The functions of the foreign bureau are—(1) to publish the *Masses*; (2) to produce Marxist literature particularly for India; (3) to educate party workers; (4) to act as the organ through which the CI guides the activities of its Indian section. The bureau will have 3 members, viz the comrade in Paris, CPI (CPD) and myself. A resolution of the party concerning the foreign bureau should be sent to the CI in order that all possibilities of misunderstanding and conflict as in the case of Sak's and Camp's visit will be eliminated for the future.

*The Masses*: Some explanation about the role of it appears to have become necessary, much to our surprise. Edward in one of his letters referred to above, suggests the abolition of the *Masses* and states that a similar paper can be published in India and we can all contribute to it. Unquestionably the publication of our organs inside the country is preferable to their publication abroad. But could we possibly publish the *Masses* in India? I doubt. Such suggestion as regards the *Masses* are made by comrades who apparently forget that it is an organ of the CI, to provide the Indian communists with the ideological and political guide they need. Can an organ of the CI be published inside a country where, in addition to innumerable other difficulties, there even does not exist a properly constituted section of it. If we, the Indian communists accept the leadership of the CI then the *Masses* must continue and do valuable service to the Indian proletarian movement in the future as it did in the past.

The *Masses* should be recognised by the CP of India as a very valuable instrument of its development and to increase its circulation should be one of the fundamental tasks of the party. Every member of the CP must read the *Masses* tendencies. The *Masses* is the standard of the CP and to push its circulation should be the lever to pro-

mote the growth of the party. The circulation should be built as much as possible on paying basis. As an organ of the CI the *Masses* is the central organ of the CP of India.

*Conference Abroad:* I have touched upon a whole series of questions covering all the principal departments of our activities.

None of the questions, however, has been exhaustively dealt with. It cannot be done in one letter. Besides, many of the questions are likely to provoke discussion which will be very welcome because when we will come to an agreement after free and frank discussion, the solid basis for collective work will be laid and the party will only be benefited by it. Therefore, finally, I come to the questions dealt with in this letter, and many other equally important questions? Such a discussion is essential for the development of the party. We need a conference, and it can be only abroad; because apart from ourselves, the participation of others will be highly valuable, but they cannot come to India. Therefore, the proposal to send a few leading comrades representing different views is hereby made for your consideration. The comrades will not have to go to the headquarters, we will meet somewhere in West Europe. Comrades busy in TU work can be selected. They can travel legally. In a separate letter the names will be suggested. Here, I only emphasise upon the political importance of such a conference. Together with a few comrades of ours, several TU and left nationalist leaders (Sasmal?) sympathetic towards can be sent.

Now the financial matter. During the last months there was disturbance for reasons known to you. Arrangement has been newly made to continue the aid for the three papers and also for the monthly in the north, if necessary. Besides provision has also been made for other necessities as specified in a report received two months ago. This is temporary arrangement. Things will be in better shape in the new year. But we remain convinced that all these practical questions can also be satisfactorily settled when some of you could come out for a visit. The new arrange-

ment will be according to a plan, which will be communicated to you in due time. Meanwhile, I may mention that the plan will include the publication by the WPP of a series of small pamphlets dealing elementarily with the theoretical and organisational questions of workingclass politics. The party press must be systematised, centralised and reorganised with the determination to make it at least partially selfsupporting within a given period. Small apparatuses for the two parties will have to be created with specific tasks. The question of printing press is being considered. But previous experience is not encouraging. It is not at all more economical to buy press abroad. Please find out how much money will be needed to buy one or two small printing establishments in the country. I am of the opinion that for our present purposes we do not need our own press which will only lock up money that could be more profitably used.

I hope to have regular correspondence with you henceforth. With very best wishes for success in the common struggle.

30 December 1927

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## V. The Workers and Peasants Party Spread

### 14. GENERAL POLITICAL SITUATION

#### *Introduction:*

An examination and analysis of the present situation of India, which is necessary for the formulation of a correct party policy, requires to take into account many factors. It is necessary to give a brief description of the world economic and political situation in its bearing upon India, the general situation of imperialism and the colonial countries, the British empire generally and in particular the position of India within it. In more detail it will be necessary to discuss the economic strength and political organisation of the chief forces and groups within India, the British bourgeoisie, middle classes, peasants, working class. In the light of this analysis current political events must be surveyed and party policy in different spheres laid down.

#### *The International Position:*

(1) *Stabilisation*—The period of the struggle by the capitalist states for stability after the war is now coming to an end, a new and relatively stable position has been achieved. At no time has complete freedom from war or revolution on an important scale been actually reached, but the tendency is in this direction, and the conditions are preparing for a new plunge, as in 1914, into international chaos.

(2) *Prospect of War*—The chief features of the new situation are, the relative progress of capitalism in the backward countries and the USA. Exploitation of labour and unemployment have generally increased greatly, political reaction in an extreme form is triumphant, the pres-

sure of international competition is greatly increased, armaments are larger than ever before, and war is manifestly to occur in the near future. The Soviet Republics not only add greatly to the strength of the movements for emancipation all over the world but prove the possibility of socialistic reconstruction of society by the working masses alone. They constitute a menace to the stability of imperialism and capitalist exploitation, and the capitalist world, especially Britain, prepares to attack and destroy this menace. Only the unstable state of international relationship in Europe and the class situation in Britain have prevented the consummation before this time of the policy of attack on Russia. The danger of war against the workers' republics is increasing and demands the attention of the masses. Simultaneously are developing between capitalist countries a number of conflicts of which the most dangerous is that between Britain and USA.

(3) *Strengthening of the Revolutionary Labour Movement*—At the same time, the labour movement in the capitalist countries is increasing in strength. The Norwegian labour government, recent victories in the German elections, the British miners, etc.

(4) *Colonial Question*—The economic and political development in the colonial countries has given rise to movements of revolt against the imperialist powers led, e.g. in Egypt and China, by the native bourgeois class which has come into existence as a byproduct of industrial development. In China the movement was later taken up by the masses whose condition under the increased exploitation became intolerable. The movement acquired a mass character, and once again showed that the only real leadership for a movement of colonial freedom is the working class. The treachery and desertion of the bourgeoisie, in alliance with imperialism, has brought the movement to a temporary halt, but it will inevitably be resumed. In Java the movement was from the first of a mass character. The British empire generally, and India particularly, is experiencing the same development. The search for profits for British interests has intensified. More

capital is invested in India, particularly since 1914, and this tendency still prevails, though in recent years it has been hampered by the decreasing surplus of British capital available for external investment. Increased accumulation is, therefore, even more urgently necessary, and attempts are being made to exploit Indian agriculture more intensely and more efficiently (the agriculture commission). There is a general tendency to increase land revenue and assessments. Attempts are made to usurp the exploiting function of the moneylenders (cooperative banks), to consolidate holdings with a view to more efficient cultivation (Bombay small holdings bills) and to increase the production of raw materials for industry (Sukkur barrage scheme).

In the political sphere, the British empire is in a very serious position. It is threatened with the formal secession of the white dependencies, and with freedom movements in the colonial countries, South Africa, Egypt, East Africa, Iraq, etc. Its industrial and financial supremacy is lost and its position still is declining specially in comparison with the USA. This critical situation leads the British bourgeoisie to seek support within the colonies, to secure its hold upon them, particularly in the event of war, which almost led to the separation of India on the last occasion. This political necessity, combined with economic developments, dictates the fundamental line of imperialist political policy within India—the extension of the alliance with the Indian upper classes (feudal rulers, landlords, etc.), to the bourgeoisie as a whole. This is the essence of the reformed constitution and the other policies of Indianisation of services, etc. which go with it.

### *The Position of the British Bourgeoisie in India:*

The British bourgeoisie as a whole derive wealth from India in four main ways, by selling British goods, by buying or producing cheap raw materials, by taxation and by investment of capital in Indian industries. Though the monopoly of India as a market is lost, British goods still



occupy the most important place, and in other respects British capital is predominant. The direct holding of capital from Britain is the big companies, usually registered in London, gives British capital a practical monopoly of railways, shipping, banking and the jute and tea industries. London interests are also predominant in coal and steel and engineering. Local British companies, mainly in Bengal, have strong interests in electric power, dock and transport, flour mills, rice mills, timber and construction companies, etc. Indian capital is predominant only in cotton among the large industries. (The Tata steel firm is now partly British and American, but owns small firms in all branches of industry and controls most retail distribution, etc.) Of the capital invested in joint stock companies, over 80 per cent, probably 85 per cent is British, and in these companies, British influence is extending. There is, of course, much unregistered Indian capital in small and private firms. The penetration of other foreign capital is not yet important but is likely to grow (Sir Dorab Tata's American tour).

The central financial institution is largely under government control, with participation of British and Indian industrial and financial representatives. The new scheme will probably not alter this position. The Indian bourgeoisie have been pressing for popular control, ie greater representation of their interests, but have been foiled up to the present. They have been especially anxious to achieve this control since the exchange rate controversy, when the strongest (textile) section of the Indian bourgeoisie, with the small companies with business conducted in rupees, were defeated and the government and financial interests (British mainly) with the big firms doing their business largely in London in sterling were benefited.

The policy of imperialism in India to retain its position of dominance, is a threefold one. It secures firm control of the chief industries, communications, administration, etc. and extends the area of its support among the ruling, landowning and bourgeois classes in India. Secondly, by encouraging internal conflicts of various kinds it

disintegrates the forces of opposition to it. Finally, it conducts a policy of direct suppression of movements dangerous to its rule.

The British bourgeoisie in India control a large proportion, as aforesaid, of the active capital operating in India, and with it the apparatus of the law, the administration, at any rate in rural areas, the educational system, the chief commercial organs of the press, the police and armed forces. In addition there is practically complete control of the rulers of the native states who are almost completely despotic, and are allowed wide powers within their own territories. Imperialism is actually opposed to the introduction of democratic forms of government within the states, and assists them in the suppression of internal revolt (recent passing of order for deportation of state subjects from British India into certain states at the wish of the ruler). Further, imperialism has firm support from the big landowning class and from those sections, especially in upper India, whose capital is invested in British firms (Sir R. N. Mukherji, G. D. Birla, etc.). The industrial bourgeoisie, and with them the professional class, lawyers, university teachers, etc. are increasingly in the position of constitutional supporters.

Imperialism finds further firm support in the Anglo-Indian community, which supplies a substantial part of the skilled artisans, and to a less extent among the Indian christian community, under the influence of missionaries.

Nevertheless, the support of these sections of the population is not sufficient, and especially after the great agitation of 1917-22, further means have been adopted not so much to gain support as to weaken opposition. There has, throughout the period of imperialist control, been a systematic encouragement of differences of religion, community, castes, etc. and it has been a settled policy to perpetuate religious and customary evils which retard physical, intellectual and social development. The mass of the people is moreover kept illiterate and severe restrictions are placed upon the education given to the middle classes in

schools and universities. Specific cases of the encouragement of difference among Indians are the development of the nonbrahmin movement in South India (Madras and Maharashtra) against the chief political and intellectual leaders, who are brahmins. The depressed classes representatives have been won over to support imperialism against the caste hindus, even to the extent of opposing boycott of the [Simon] commission. Even certain parts of the labour movement are in the same position. These movements have all a genuine basis in the oppression of these sections by the higher classes, but imperialism has been enabled to make use of them to perpetuate its own existence and therefore to secure the continuance of the evils against which these movements protest.

The most important case of this policy of fomentation of differences is that of the hindu-muslim divergence. While partly an artificial result, e.g. of the agitation of the British owned press on the alleged atrocities during the Malabar rising, the dangers of a moslem invasion from the northwest, etc. and of the communal electorate, the trouble has a certain class basis. In the Punjab most of the peasantry is mussalman, while the exploiting money-lenders, etc. are mainly hindus. As also in Bengal most of the peasants are mussalman and the zamindars and money-lenders largely hindus. These are the chief centres of communal feeling. Further, a considerable class of communal leaders has sprung up, whose popular influence and income depend upon the inflammation of communal passion, and the direction of the natural discontent of the exploited masses away from political avenues where it could produce useful results into the communal channel.

At the same time, the policy of imperialism has been one of the continued oppression of efforts to extend the basis of the national movement to include the masses. The men returning from Russia with radical or communist ideas have been practically all imprisoned and victimised. Others with similar ideas have been treated in the same way, e.g. in the Kanpur conspiracy case. There is a continuous series of prosecutions in different parts of the

country of writers and speakers, for "inciting" the masses to hatred against the government. Finally, there is maintained a vigorous censorship of mail, especially foreign, and wholesale proscription and seizure of literature with a radical tendency.

It is manifest that an imperialist rule of this strong and ruthless character, which is at the same time subject to the most intense pressure and competition in other parts of the world, will not at any time grant considerable concessions to any of those from whom it derives its sustenance. The hope of compromise by India as a whole with imperialism is in vain.

#### *Landowners, Native States, etc.*

Nearly one fourth of the population of India is included in the native states, which constitute on the whole the most economically and culturally backward, and politically reactionary section of the country. In practically no case is there any important industrial development, and even communication is poor. Almost all states are under a complete despotism, only a few being tempered by some rudiments of democracy. The rule is in practice often harsh and arbitrary to an intolerable degree, and outbreaks of opposition by peasants often occur. Almost all rulers of native states are active or passive supporters of imperialism.

A large part of British India is also under the dominance of big landholders, zamindars, etc. who in some cases wield powers approximating to those of the states rulers. In many districts forced labour and other feudal dues are still exacted from peasants, and arbitrary expropriation of peasants' holdings is common. Rents are forced up usually to the maximum possible limit, often many times higher than the government tax assessments.

The princes and the big zamindars of the eastern (and to a smaller extent the western) provinces are the chief owners of the land of the country, and the chief obstacle

to the economic advance and prosperity of its main occupation, agriculture.

The chamber of princes and the various zamindars' conferences, the organs of these sections, are practically without exception loyal to imperialism and for long represented its chief support within the country. It is a part of the policy of imperialism to maintain the native states and to some extent the zamindari system, as a stronghold of reaction and political backwardness within the country. Political advance within the states is discouraged, suppression of opposition movements supported. Similarly in British India, the landlords in their own interests suppress peasants' movements or capture and lead them for their own purposes.

#### *The Indian Bourgeoisie:*

As shown previously the Indian bourgeoisie is in a position of subordination to British capital, and is relatively weak and backward. It is partly allied with British capital in industry and finance, especially in Northern India but even in Bombay, to a less extent. And it is partly independent, chiefly in Bombay, but also to an extent, which is politically important, in Bengal. In general its development is blocked by the competition of the established largescale British industries and British control of finances and tariff policy. In Bombay, the Indian interests, more compact and independent, have long ago developed an attitude of constitutional and cooperative opposition. Only where their interests are seriously threatened, e.g. over the ratio, will they seriously oppose. In North India, the bourgeoisie is more divided. A section is practically loyalist, while other, especially in Bengal, where the pressure of British supremacy is most felt, is still in vigorous, though constitutional, opposition and constitutes the strength in that province of the Swaraj Party and the Congress. Bengal is now almost the only province in which the bourgeoisie takes direct part in the Congress.

The political organisation of the Indian bourgeoisie is

weak. Apart from the chambers of commerce, etc. which seek no popular support, there are several political parties, mainly the product of successive splits from the Congress. Of these the Liberal Party, primarily an industrialists' party, alone has achieved permanence and membership outside the councils. The independents, etc. are all shifting and unstable groups, their evolution determined by personal and other minor motives. Nevertheless, their members are individually influential in their constituencies and in humanitarian, religious and other organisations, and own important organs of the press.

None of the bourgeois parties, in any case, has attempted or achieved a mass membership except the Congress. Even congress membership has never been more than a formality, though at the period of its greatest activity a large proportion of members were active. There has never been close organisation or discipline. Subscription is low. Since 1922, when the Swaraj Party was formed to enter the councils, the congress has split into successive fractions and steadily lost ground.

The essence of the policy of the bourgeoisie as a whole, and now even of the left section, is compromise with imperialism. The policy in the Assembly on all questions affecting the economic positions of the Indian bourgeoisie has been one of pressing for concessions and a *modus vivendi*. All parties have been united on these occasions. Similarly on political questions. The united demand of the Indian representatives in the Assembly has always been a round-table conference—a means of compromise. Swaraj and independence agitation have been a means of bringing pressure to bear and no more. Even the labour movement, which is still largely in bourgeois hands, is looked upon in this light (cf. resolution on labour organisation by Liberal Federation, session 1927). The bourgeoisie by the policy of acquiescence are obstructing the progress of India. Even the elementary rights of political democracy are no longer demanded by them (see the constitutions drafted by an ex-president and ex-secretary of the Congress, one demanding "literate suffrage", and the other the

present suffrage). The bourgeoisie on the contrary is opposed to the interests of the masses (e.g. opposition in the Assembly to the proposed concessions to Tata's workers) and is afraid of their movement. It deserted and broke up the NCO movement for fear of mass action, and for the same reason seeks to keep the labour movement under its control. The bourgeoisie as a whole can no longer be looked upon as the leader of the national movement in the interests of the mass of the Indian people.

### *The Petty Bourgeoisie:*

[It] consists of various sections, but a large part of it suffers more or less acutely from poverty. The pressure of exploitation and the retarded economic development of the country lead to an excess of supply over demand of small retail business of all kinds, and of small industrial undertakings, and professional classes. These sections suffer from unemployment and undercutting due to the competition, especially of small landowners who attempt to supplement their income from urban occupations. The stagnation of industry in recent years has intensified this position, and all but the upper grade of even the learned professions are in a position of economic insecurity. Technical education for industry is scanty, and in most firms European technicians are largely employed, while the reservation of a large part of the services for Europeans is a standing grievance.

The membership of the Congress has for long been predominantly petty bourgeois. After the collapse of the NCO movement due to the desertion of the bourgeoisie, it split into various factions. The no-change section, where it exists, represents mainly village craftsmen, small landholders, and others of independent means, who left their professions and had no urgent need to return to them when the policy was abandoned. This section is dominated by personal loyalty to Gandhi and is typically peasant in its mentality—religious, submissive to fate, obstinate and unchangeable in its outlook. As representing an economic-

ally obsolescent class of small landowners and village artisans, its policy is reactionary (opposition to industrialism etc.) though there is a radical section, principally of those who left employment or universities, etc. under the influence of NCO and were later abandoned by the bourgeois leaders without means of support. The no-change section as a whole is declining with the practical withdrawal of its one important leader from politics, and is ceasing to be an important factor in the Congress.

Another section, primarily urban small business men, etc. followed the majority of the congress leaders into the Swaraj Party and the councils. Beginning with a program of obstruction it rapidly degenerated into cooperating, openly or covertly, for the purpose of securing gains for its supporters, who now constitute the strongest section in the Congress.

Though as a whole vague and vacillating in its policy, the petty bourgeoisie has split into these two main sections. The class difference within the congress membership has been accentuated, the upper strata following the bourgeoisie and its council policy, the lower falling into indifference or a radical policy. This growing difference is widely felt within the Congress but is often misunderstood, being attributed to a conflict between youth and age, etc.

The lower strata of the petty bourgeoisie, the unemployed, etc., a section of the noncooperators, and the remnant of the terrorist parties, are the unformed "left" of the Congress and constitute part of the ground from which the workers and peasants parties are now rising.

### *Peasants:*

The peasants who form the bulk of the nation, are notoriously in a condition of great poverty and backwardness. The land of the country, from which the peasants derive their living, is in the hands of three main agencies, the big landlords, including the state rulers, the government and religious institutions, all of which demand their



quota from the cultivators. All suffer from the gradually increasing demands of the government for direct taxes, as well as from indirect taxation, e.g. on salt and other imported goods. The excessive payments for irrigation water, often unnecessary and excessive in amount, are a similar burden in certain parts. Rents to landlords and intermediaries, of whom there may be several strata, are perhaps the heaviest burden which the peasants have to bear, and many suffer also from insecurity of tenure, and from forced labour, etc. The class of moneylenders and village shopkeepers often identified with the landlord, by entangling the peasants in debts at high rates of interest, add to their misery and economic insecurity. Exaction for religious purposes and the support of a priest class constitute a further heavy burden.

The rural population is also disturbed by the introduction of manufactured goods, which deprive the village craftsmen of their employment and add to the class of landless labourers. The fractionation of holdings renders cultivation less and less efficient, and there is a strong tendency for the land to pass out of the possession of small cultivators into the hands of mortgage holders, landlords, etc. The consequent overpressure on the land is increased by the retention of large tracts uncultivated, and by the appropriation of large areas for the production of industrial crops.

The official claim that the peasants as a whole are increasing in prosperity, is untrue, as many investigations show. The great majority are becoming increasingly poor, many are taking to wage labour either on the land or in industry, while only a small section, successful peasants, moneylenders, etc. of the village population is improving its economic position. An increasingly intense class struggle is developing in the rural areas, between the mass of the rural poor, the 25 millions of wage labourers, the artisans and the poor peasants on the one hand; and the big landlords, the religious institutions, the moneylenders, shopkeepers, etc. on the other.

The peasants have taken hitherto little part in politics.

At the height of the NCO movement, the peasants joined in large number (Bombay, UP) but on the abandonment of the policy of nonpayment of taxes, out of regard for the interests of the landlord class, which at any rate in its lower strata was strong in the Congress, they left again. Many peasants societies were then in existence, especially in UP but if radical, they were ruthlessly suppressed and those now in existence are small, and under moderate guidance. In the Punjab (the akali movement) a partial success was achieved, and in Rajputana and Central India, and in Bengal, peasant societies of radical tendencies exist. Feeling in rural areas is becoming strong, particularly in UP but the movement finds little organised expression, peasants often allowing themselves to be misled by their class opponents (Alibag agitation).

#### **Workers:**

The main mass of workers outside agriculture, in the cotton, jute, railways, docks, marine, building, metal and other minor industries, in all 30 million persons, with dependents, live in extreme poverty and bad conditions. Wages are low—Rs 10 to Rs 40 for most; hours are long, 10 per day being usual. Housing conditions are almost universally bad, sanitation defective and death rate high; illiteracy and general ignorance is the rule. Insecurity of employment, victimisation and arbitrary expulsion by jobbers and excessive fines, etc. render the life of the workers of his class intensely miserable. While in some industries, competition and mismanagement render profits apparently low, there is reason to suspect hidden profits, and in many cases high profits are acknowledged year after year (jute, tea, etc.). Workers are taught by experience that there is no difference between European and Indian employers, who equally profit during disputes by the use of state forces, the law and the police. The number and importance of strikes is increasing and a sharp class struggle is developing in Indian industry.

Nevertheless, trade-unionism is weak in the chief in-

dustries, though it is growing slowly. Organisation is strong in government departments (posts, telegraphs, currency, etc.) and among similar classes but these are superior grade workers (earning Rs 50-200 or more) who have by a policy of isolation and the intimidation of superiors, acquired a reactionary mentality, and fallen under the leadership of middleclass individuals, lawyers, etc. who encourage this. Some unions of lower grade workers have grown strong, but the movement still as a whole is dominated and held back by ideas of sectionalism, local or craft, abstention from policies, fear of victimisation, etc. inculcated by employers or leaders. It has been the conscious policy of the bourgeoisie to control the labour movement, and they have succeeded largely in spreading their ideas, and restraining independent action by the workers. The TUC itself is strongly influenced by this school of thought.

Some sections of workers are achieving emancipation from this influence, and others at times force their leaders to act in a militant manner. The increasing pressure from the employers (cotton, railways) in the past two or three years has led to a considerable increase in militancy and class consciousness and in actual organisation. The position of the workers forces them into active struggle, in which class consciousness and the need for organised action are clearly shown, and these effects are being made manifest. Political consciousness also is growing (three unions' decision for one-day strike on the landing of the [Simon] commission).

### *Recent Development:*

In spite of its faults of leadership, the bourgeoisie has remained in control of national politics, and this circumstance has led to a stagnation of political life since 1922, when the bourgeoisie and the landowners woke to the realisation of the dangers of the mass movement they were creating and caused its collapse. The movement was quickly suppressed by imperialist forces, and an interval of

quiet occurred. Since 1924 a number of factors have brought about a gradual revival of political feeling and class differentiation within India and its bearing on the national movement are being felt. The general tendency is for the lower strata of the petty bourgeoisie to take up the national struggle once more, and to unite with the workers and peasants, hampered and opposed to a greater or less extent by the bourgeoisie and its followers. A section of the bourgeoisie (Bengal and Madras particularly) still maintains a verbally militant leadership, but exposes its class position by opposing the tendency to seek mass support. The bourgeoisie as a whole drifts away from nationalism into a working agreement with imperialism. The advent of the Simon commission while giving a great impetus to the growth of national feeling, has driven part of the bourgeoisie once again into the national camp. The situation is obviously not stable, and differences, are already appearing (failure of leaders to agree to Hindu-Muslim pact, etc.).

### *Conclusion:*

To summarise: We have shown the gradual growth of class differences in all spheres of Indian life. The imperialist bourgeoisie exploit India from all directions, middle classes, peasantry and workers, and generally obstruct economic and cultural development. Allied with the imperialists are the state rulers and big landowners, who exist on the exploitation of the great mass of the rural population and to an increasing extent, the Indian bourgeoisie, in a position of subordination but alliance with the imperialist bourgeoisie, exploiting the middle class and the peasants, but most of all the industrial workers.

The imperialists and their allies control the political life of the country, restraining it within such narrow bounds that the exploited masses cannot find expression except in direct action, through strikes or no-tax campaigns. The alliance of exploiters is opposed to national freedom, democratic institutions and the expression of

opinion, or the development of indigenous culture, and even such elementary physical necessities as adequate sanitation, elementary education, and a tolerable standard of life.

The movements for the attainment of these necessities are being and must be coordinated in a great mass movement of the exploited sections of the population, the workers, the peasants, and the middle classes, against imperialism and its allies, the state rulers, the big landowners and such of the bourgeoisie as will not sacrifice their immediate economic interests to the higher interests of the great mass of their countrymen. This movement will incidentally provide the only ultimate solution of the communal questions which have split India's ranks in the past. Cooperative work for the fundamental needs of the masses will swallow up the minor differences of race and creed.

The bourgeoisie, the traditional leaders of the national movement, have already to a large extent forsaken the movement and are betraying their unfitness for leadership. They are no longer interested in attaining independence. They do not fight for political democracy, or for any other demands of the people. On the contrary, their vacillating policy of opposition to imperialism in words and acquiescence in deeds, is opposed to the progress of the movement. All experience of similar movements shows that the industrial working class alone is fitted to lead this struggle through to the end, and to fight consistently for the interests of all the Indian people. The working class through its own struggle learns discipline and organisation, the tactics and the strategy of political struggle. It alone can provide the steel frame necessary to guide the scattered and vacillating masses of the urban middle class and peasantry to freedom. It alone has the determination and aggressive spirit necessary to push the struggle to the end in the interests of all.

It is, therefore, essential that workingclass organisations, the trade unions and TUC fight and obtain freedom from bourgeois control, under which most of them now exist. They must also obtain freedom from the reaction-

ary and confused ideas which the bourgeoisie cultivate among them. These things require an independent workers' political party to educate, organise and lead the workers in their struggle.

Under the leadership of the industrial workers, the movement of the masses can go forward to abolish foreign exploitation, to establish democracy, and those elementary prerequisites of life which 95 per cent of the populations of India still lack. By means of strikes, demonstrations, hartals and the more laborious means of organisation and education, the class consciousness and the solidarity of the masses will be raised to the level necessary before its task can be achieved.

Almost the most important problem which the masses will have to solve is the agrarian question, the relation of the cultivators to the soil on which they work. No solution can be satisfactory unless the central question of the ownership of land is decided, against the reactionary system of the partition of land among a few big owners with arbitrary powers of expulsion and exploitation; for the principle of land for the cultivator himself. Only if this is achieved can the minor problems of technical development, credit, education, etc. be solved usefully. And only the organised power of the immense majority of the peasants and landless labourers exerted in conjunction with the general nationalist and labour struggle can bring about this solution.

This mass movement is slowly developing. But in the early stages it requires conscious and intelligent guidance and this is the function of the Workers and Peasants Party. The party has its task to gather all sincere fighting elements from the ranks of the workers, the peasants, the exploited middle class and the militant national movement, and to fuse them into one united whole for conducting their united struggle. It will establish particularly close relations with the youth, the future leaders of the country, and the trade unions, the source from which most of its strength will be drawn.

The future of the country, its economic development, education, culture and the wellbeing of the masses depend upon the rapid development of this mass movement of the exploited millions, united and guided by the Workers and Peasants Party.

*Present Political Situation:*

The collapse of the noncooperation movement was not at first realised and expectation of its resumption and triumph continued for some time. But years went by, the policy of the council parties became more and more compromising and no effort was made to revive a mass movement. Hope of progress along the old lines gradually faded, and at the same time the class conflict within the country and the Congress made itself increasingly felt. At first reaction on the part of Congress supporters was growing indifference, but later it developed into a vague but increasingly acute discontent. The lower strata of the petty bourgeoisie who had been drawn into the NCO movement were becoming impatient for a forward move. This tendency has been assisted by various factors—prolonged economic stagnation, the growth of a war atmosphere (preparations on the frontiers, failure to disarm, dispatch of troops to China, etc.), disappointment at the complete failure of the British labour government to do what had been expected of a party pledged to selfdetermination and a fight against imperialism, the Chinese and Japanese events, continued provocation by imperialism (the exchange question, the Bengal detentions and other repressive measures). Saklatvala's propaganda, Miss Mayo's book and its alleged official patronage, all have had their effect. A new policy is being sought and a national feeling is once again arising with a partial abandonment of the old ideas. The rise in various provinces of an organised youth movement after the absorption of the previous generation of the organised youth in congress agitation and subsequent stagnation is symptomatic of the process. The increasing organisation and militancy of the workers,

as shown in numerous recent strikes, adds to the volume of protest against the existing order.

On the other hand, the bourgeoisie, with their supporters among the professional and other middle classes, were moving in the opposite direction. The long-awaited statutory commission was having its expected effect upon them, and draft constitutions, all contemplating dominion status as the goal of nationalist effort, were being prepared for acceptance by the Congress. ("Dominion status" has for some time been the accepted aim of most schools of bourgeois nationalist thought. The essence of the idea is the maintenance of imperialist exploitation, but with the Indian bourgeoisie in a more favourable position, and with the imperial forces ready to defend bourgeois interests, as now.)

The appointment of the statutory commission without Indian members rendered a policy of conciliation by the bourgeois leaders for a time impossible. So great was the general indignation that even the most compromising groups among the bourgeois nationalists have been forced to support the policy of boycott, conditional or absolute.

The result has been to prevent a further exposure of the bourgeoisie, and to strengthen them temporarily as the national leaders. It has further hampered a serious campaign of mass opposition on the basis of the boycott agitation. Nevertheless public feeling has developed very strongly, in spite of all efforts, to accentuate the communal divisions, so that the Congress and even the liberal and other groups have had to go further in the direction of mass opposition than they at first wished (the independence resolution and the agreement by the Benaras meeting to an all-India hartal). The masses too are entering the movement to a certain extent. In Bombay, three unions took formal decisions to strike, and more than thirty thousand workers actually struck and demonstrated. Many workers took part in other places.

Nevertheless, the desertion of the majority of the bourgeois leaders, both within the Congress and without, is



certain and is already taking place. They have partially abandoned the policy of abstention from the legislatures. Many, e.g. in the assembly debate, openly appeal for Indian membership of the commission, and admit the right of imperialism to the last word in deciding the future of India. Boycott on principle was abandoned by the assembly resolution which merely declared unacceptable the "present constitution and scheme of the commission". The decision to draft a constitution by the All-Parties Conference is an admission of the right of the British government to decide whether it shall be granted or not. Otherwise a statement of rights and a program of action are all that are required of the All-Parties' Conference. The formula which it has accepted, "full responsible government" and the apologetic plea that "dominion status is a step towards independence" mark the collapse of the congress program of complete independence. The quibbling over the communal differences show that no fundamental change in the nature of the government is sought, and the petty sectional interests of today are allowed excessive importance. The decision not to advocate the alteration of the despotic regime prevailing in the Indian states, means that that fight which the nationalist movement must carry on against feudal oppression is to be shirked. The almost unanimous opinion in favour of a second chamber based on some restricted franchise show the reactionary and unrepresentative nature of the conference and effectually disposes of the pretence that mass support is to be sought to enforce the demands. The almost entirely bourgeois composition of the conference determines its intentions and policy. The participation of the Trade Union Congress is of no significance, as it is rightly believed to be under bourgeois control. How seriously the inclusion of the Trade Union Congress is taken is shown by the decision not to admit the right of strike among the "rights of workers and peasants".

Those congress leaders who have agreed to the All-Parties Conference decisions have clearly shown that their advocacy of complete independence is insincere. The plea

of unity put forward to justify this action is entirely specious. Unity is possible only on the basis of a common principle. Those who want complete independence cannot compromise with those who are opposed to it. The sacrifice of complete independence for the sake of unity with the bourgeois parties is a betrayal of the immense majority of the population for the favour of a minute reactionary minority. Even the agreement of the bourgeois majority to many democratic principles, embodied in the All-Parties Conference decisions, is not adequate a gain to weight against the abandonment of the forward policy implied in the principle of complete independence, and those who have agreed to this bargain are guilty of a serious tactical mistake, if not more.

The agitation in the country of the congress leaders led by Bengal, is confined to boycott of British goods. This is a reformist weapon, intended to extort a compromise—alone it can do no more—from the government. The bourgeois class is demonstrating once more its inability any longer to lead the national movement.

The middle classes, to whom the boycott propaganda is directed, are reacting to it only in a halfhearted manner. Confidence in the majority of the bourgeois leaders has not yet been restored by their verbal radicalism over the commission, and the masses generally are unwilling to be exploited for what they now know to be only the compromising ends of the bourgeoisie. There is a grave danger that the mass protest and indignation caused by the commission will be allowed to die away in disappointment. Nothing but a militant and uncompromising practical lead will restore it to life and enable it to grow. It is the task of the Workers and Peasants Party to supply that lead.

#### *Task of the Party:*

The fundamental work before the party is to organise the working class and give it sufficient political education

to enable it to come forward as the leading section of the mass movement which is now rising in India. It is the duty of all who are concerned with obtaining national freedom, establishing democracy within the country, and rescuing the population generally from its poverty, ignorance and social backwardness, to assist in this work. The chief immediate task for the party is, by putting forward its correct, consistent and uncompromising policy, in contrast to the unhistoric, vacillating and timid policy of the present leaders, to gather together all fighting progressive forces from all sections, and thereby to establish its own organisation, which will enable it to carry on its ultimate function. A strong conscious and well disciplined Workers and Peasants Party is the most pressing need of the present.

The policy of the party must be to carry forward the campaign for the boycott of the commission to the utmost extent in spite of any sabotage. Strikes and hartals must be encouraged and the masses brought into the movement by associating their demands with the national slogans. The campaign must demand complete national independence and must work for the calling of a constituent assembly elected by universal adult suffrage which will concentrate and express authoritatively the diverse demands and scattered struggles of the masses. The constituent assembly, which can give the masses the united and militant lead which the All-Parties Conference failed to give, will be the nation's real answer to the British government and the Simon commission, and will constitute a definite step forward in the struggle of the masses for complete independence and the satisfaction of their pressing economic needs.

The slogans of the boycott of British goods may be supported as a means of arousing enthusiasm, but only as a subsidiary to the slogan of a constituent assembly. As opposed to the program of the All-Parties Conference, the party must demand on behalf of the masses complete independence, and the establishment of democracy—universal adult suffrage, freedom of speech, etc. the abolition

of the native states and the landlord system, and the guarantee of the economic, political and social rights which the workers and peasants as classes require.

The party must also carry on propaganda in relation to international affairs. The League against Imperialism must be supported, and the propaganda for the alliance of the revolutionary labour movement and the colonial revolutionary movements be assisted. Solidarity must be encouraged with the Russian and Chinese revolutions, particularly in view of the danger of war. And a definite campaign must be conducted against war, especially among the peasants, who supply the soldiers, and among the workers, who supply the materials and transport. The slogan must be advanced of noncooperation with the government and the war machine in the event of war.

The work of the party in particular spheres may be summarised as follows:

(1) We must endeavour to make the Congress adopt a program of mass demands and to support them in its current propaganda. We and our sympathisers must become members of the provincial and all-India congress committees, and take active part in such work as leads towards the development of mass movement. We must support the Congress while it fights imperialism, but must not hesitate to criticise the compromising tendencies of Congress leaders, however prominent. The alliance of the party with the petty-bourgeois left of the Congress must be consolidated on the basis of direct action for complete independence, as against the compromising bourgeois leadership.

(2) We must conduct propaganda among the youth that they may assist us in our work. The ideas of youth are sufficiently fluid and free from obsolete prejudices to enable us to enlist them on the side of the masses. We must assist in the establishment of a youth organisation with the advanced program of demands and action, which shall broaden the social basis of the existing, primarily middle-class youth movement.

(3) We must undertake the organisation and political education of the masses of workers and peasants. With the industrial workers, our task is twofolds: (a) We have to organise the unorganised masses. (b) We have to emancipate those which are organised from false ideas and false leadership. The former can only be done by consistent work on the basis of a radical program of demands for improvement in working and living conditions. The middleclass leaders have failed to bring about effective organisation of the enormous mass of lower grade workers. We must utilise their numerous spontaneous outbursts of protest to carry on the work of organisation and propaganda among them.

In regard to (b) we must show by the superiority of our work and fighting policy that ours is the only correct policy to follow. We have to push forward all methods for increasing the possibilities of militant action. We must encourage the amalgamation of overlapping unions and the formation of central bodies such as trades councils. Within the unions we have to urge the adoption of democratic forms of organisation, and the participation of the workers themselves in the organisations, formation of branches, based upon the place of work or residence, the holding of regular and frequent meetings, the discussion by members of political and business subjects, educational work within the unions on workingclass lines. We must further establish fractions within unions of our sympathisers and members who will urge our policy and further our program of demands. We must urge the acceptance of our policy in the TUC and other central bodies, and endeavour generally to purge it of the careerist elements by getting rid of its present status of a semiofficial institution recognised by the government as recommending safe persons for councils and Geneva conferences.

Secondly, the peasants. The masses of the peasants require organisation almost from the beginning. We must take advantage of congress and youth-association work in rural areas, and such occasions of peasant disturbance as protest against increase of land assessment, to bring about

organisation of peasants on sound lines. We must also undertake visits by our own member to villages, and induce our members and sympathisers among trade-unionists, especially railwaymen and migratory workers, to do such work.

The program of demands for peasants, which will differ somewhat from province to province and district to district, will contain the following items:

Rescue of peasants from the tyranny of the landlord by division of uncultivated land, establishment of security of tenure, abolition of forced labour and other compulsory or customary dues. Freedom from the exploitation of moneylenders, by legal limitation of the rate of interest on loans and the provision of credit through banks. Provision of educational facilities, liberal, technical and hygienic. Reduction (ultimately abolition) of rents. Control of village life by village panchayat.

The village is the unit of organisation natural for the peasants. Independent organisation of rural wage-labourers should be formed.

### *The Party:*

Most important of all, we require a party, with a large membership, efficiently organised, disciplined and active. It should have propaganda organs in Bengali and English and an agitational organ in Hindi. Each branch of the party should have its subcommittees for various classes of work—trade union, peasants, youth, congress, training.

The time is now ripe for big developments in the party and the opportunity must be seized. At present the membership is far too small to undertake efficiently the numerous and laborious tasks which the party has to perform. The most urgent need is the propaganda of the unfamiliar but profoundly important idea of the function of a party, recruitment of members, and training them to carry out party policy in the various spheres.

The party must be prepared to cooperate, without losing its identity, with all parties and organisations which will fight for the liberation of India from imperialism. But the

establishment of our own organisation is our first task, which is fundamentally necessary, and which cannot be abandoned. It is necessary further to cooperate with organisations fighting for the freedom of the oppressed nations, and with the militant anti-imperialist working class of imperialist countries.

*A Call to Action,*  
Meerut Record, P 523

## 15. YOUTH

An analysis of the situation of India at the present time reveals that the nationalist movement is undergoing a rapid change. The old movement, based upon the sectional interests of the capitalist class and its conflict with imperialism, is almost played out. The partial satisfaction of its needs, and the new policy of alliance with Indian capitalism which imperialism has adopted, have deprived it of almost all inclination to revolt against imperialism domination. At the same time the interests and sentiments of other strata of the population are forcing them to take up the struggle for freedom. The masses are becoming less amenable for use by the bourgeoisie for the peaceful extortion of concessions, and are tending to come forward on the political field as an independent force, acting in their own interests. The nationalist movement is being rapidly transformed from a movement of the wealthy and educated to a mass movement of the workers, peasantry and lower middle classes.

Imperialism denies to the masses of India the elementary rights of personal and national freedom, democratic institutions, the free development by society of its own material resources and culture, and even a tolerable standard of life. The Indian bourgeoisie, who claim to be the protagonists of the whole people, have ceased to fight for these elementary necessities. Only when the masses themselves take in hand their own struggle will success be in sight.

The urgent need of the present, for the interests of the whole population, and its future economic and social development, is the organisation and education of the mass nationalist movement, now slowly and hesitatingly making appearance on the political field. The most serious obstacle to its progress is the absence of a clear outlook and system of ideas corresponding to its needs and the circumstances of the time. Organisations of all kinds are still dominated by bourgeois interests and bourgeois mentality and timidity.

The youth is the only section of society able to free itself from the obsolete ideas of the older nationalist movement, and it is therefore upon the youth that the responsibility rests of forming and educating the new mass nationalist movement. The efforts of the old bourgeois school to retain its control over the Congress, the trade-union movement, etc., can only be defeated by the new, more vigorous ideas developed by the youth.

In the conflict now developing in India, there are only two sides. Increasingly the upper classes, including a large section of the bourgeoisie, fight on the side of imperialism against the rising mass movement. Any effort to find a middle course must necessarily fail. All experience of movements based on the middle classes proved that they must take sides, either with the bourgeoisie or with the working class. Fascism, a movement mainly of the middle classes, always and everywhere serves the interests of capitalism. Indian fascism can only serve the cause of imperialism, since imperialism and Indian capitalism are in ever closer alliance. By striking at the working class organisations fascism would destroy the only force which can free India from imperialism.

The rising generation is faced with two lines of action. It may pursue the path of traditional pure nationalism, which will inevitably lead it to the defence of capitalism and hence of imperialism and of political and social reaction. Or it may take the side of the historically progressive mass movement, assist it in its difficulties, and advance



the cause of national independence, democracy and economic and cultural progress.

The youth of all India is now awakening to consciousness on a great scale. It is essential that the Workers and Peasants Party should attract to its banner the newly organising forces of the youth. It must take energetic measures to draw as large a proportion as possible to the side of the masses, and to give them its scientific social outlook and energetic radical policy.

There must be established an independent youth organisation which shall have as its main functions to draw the youth into the political struggle, and to broaden the social basis of the traditional youth organisation by recruiting working class and peasant youth. It shall undertake the following tasks: (1) participation in the political nationalist movement, (2) advance the cause of trade-unionism among young workers, and study their working conditions, (3) fight for the redress of the special grievances of the youth, especially the unemployed, (4) political study and selfpreparation, (5) conduct of education in political and economic subjects among workers, villages and students, (6) act as a centre within the existing general youth organisations for the propaganda of radical ideas and the advancement of a sound policy.

The party must appoint a subcommittee to work with the youth organisation.

*A Call to Action,*  
Meerut Record, P 523

## 16. TRADE-UNION MOVEMENT

The trade-union movement, which must in the future play a very important part in the political struggle of the country, is yet in a very backward condition. To remedy this is one of the most important tasks before the party, and demands a large part of its attention and energy.

The chief weaknesses of the movement are:

(1) Insufficient organisation, resulting particularly in the lack of provision for the effective participation of the members in the work, and determination of policy.

(2) The tendency to restrict the organisation to narrow bounds, of locality, trade or craft, and its result in the prevalence of rival and overlapping unions.

(3) Absence of a militant policy; paying excessive attention to minor grievances, and neglecting the important questions, wages, etc.

(4) Fear of politics.

(5) Unbusinesslike methods, which reduce efficiency and open the door to corruption.

The trade-union movement has not yet learnt to avoid the mistakes committed by older movements. In particular the British trade-union movement, universally taken as a model, illustrates the necessity of participation in politics, and the dangers of sectarianism and insularity on the part of unions.

The chief root of the faulty organisation and policy of the movement is its domination by leaders drawn from the middle classes, who may have little or no knowledge of trade-unionism or politics, and who in some cases act as conscious agents of capitalism. They have shaped the movement to their ends, and imbued it with their outlook.

Grosser cases of exploitation of the movement by unprincipled leaders have already called forth many protests from the workers, and there has grown up in some cases a dangerous distrust of "outsiders" of all kinds, and even of trade-unionism itself. Even the best-intentioned among the older leaders have to confess to a relative failure to organise at any rate the great mass of lower-paid labour. The defects of a nonmilitant leadership have been very clearly shown recently in the BN railway strike, and the Bombay textile strikes. In neither cases did the leaders attempt even to maintain the already demnable economic

conditions of the workers, in spite of the magnificent stand which they were making.

The workers are ready for the sound and militant lead which the Workers and Peasants Party alone can give.

*The task of the party* is to transform the existing organisation so that it will give expression to real workingclass demands and to make the leadership such that it will give a courageous, militant and correct lead. To assist in the development of organisation so that it will be an efficient and capable machine able to secure for the workers their immediate demands such as better working condition, hours, wages, etc.; and ultimately assist in the economic emancipation of the masses.

*One Union for One Industry:* In many industries we find a number of trade unions catering for one trade. This multiplicity of unions means overlapping of work and finance; this spells inefficiency. The fact that we find members of one union working while members of another in the same trade are in dispute is to be deplored since this means weakness and defeat. This question must be vigorously dealt with and amalgamation must be advocated and achieved. There must be one trade union for railwaymen, one for textile workers, etc. Party members must always oppose the formation of splitting or rival unions, except where the only union existing is controlled by government or by employers.

*TUC and Trades Councils:* The Trade Union Congress must be made the coordinating body linking up the activities and struggle of the workers throughout India, and in this sphere the members of the party must play an active part. All unions must affiliate to the Trade Union Congress, and to its provincial committees where they exist.

Trades councils must be set up in all big industrial towns in which the rank and file of the TU movement should participate. These trades councils will be the bodies closely knitting up the activities of the workers in the towns, coordinating the struggle of the workers, dealing with industrial and labour questions, and organising

demonstrations, etc. A network of these should be set up all over the country.

The party considers that propaganda and preparatory work for the formation of trades councils in Howrah and Calcutta, with the participation of all unions and branches, should begin at once.

*100 per cent Trade-Unionism:* The only way to wring any improved conditions from the employer is by the organised power of the workers and by their being prepared to use their power. Therefore, 100 per cent organisations must be our slogan. The council set up by the TUC for this purpose must get to work and members of the party should use every effort to achieve this.

*Organisation:* It is necessary to put the trade unions on a proper basis, e.g. arrangement for membership cards, proper collection of dues, financial records and for regular meeting of members to elect officers, etc. As far as possible the officers should be actual workers and the rank and file should take a much greater part in running the trade union. Definite trade-union branches should be set up so that the members can actively participate, and weekly or fortnightly meetings should be regularly held.

*Factory Committees:* Workers in factories, etc. should elect factory committee from among themselves. Representatives should be elected from departments which would form the committee. They should look after the interests of the workers, take complaints to the employers, inspect TU cards, and assist in bringing about 100 per cent trade-unionism.

*Youth:* Vigorous work must be carried on among the youth. They must be organised in the trade-union movement on the same footing as older members and have the same rights of voting, etc.

*Immediate Demands:* Members of the party should wherever practicable be members of trade unions, actively participating in the work of the union and everyday struggle of the workers. It is necessary for our members to attend consistently to their work in the trade-union branch, EC and management committees. They should

group around themselves the left wing and best elements in an organised fashion. To get the policy of the party supported and prepare the future leadership of the trade-union movement, a constant fight is to be carried on against reformist leadership, and circles and classes on trade-unionism and political questions must be organised. The workers must be rallied around the following program of immediate demands on a national scale:

- (1) Eight-hour day; (two weeks' holiday with pay per year).
- (2) Abolition of child labour.
- (3) Abolition of system of fines.
- (4) Minimum living wage.
- (5) State support for unemployed, old-age pensions, maternity benefit, sickness benefits.
- (6) Improvement of laws regarding workmen's compensation and employers' liability.
- (7) Installation of modern safety appliances in factories, mines, etc.
- (8) Abolition of the system of *sardars*.

*Immediate Demands for Individual Industries:* It is necessary for the party to work out a program of immediate demands for individual industries, such as one for miners, one for railwaymen, textile [workers], etc., with slogans that will rally the workers of those particular industries around the party in their struggle for better conditions.

*A Call to Action,*  
Meerut Record, P 523

## 17. PEASANTS

Threefourths of the population of India, or to be more precise, 221 millions out of a total of 320 are dependent on

agriculture. Thus the very numerical strength of the peasants and their importance in the total production of social wealth and the basic, vital necessities of life must compel on our part a predominant attention to their needs and their position and part in the general national struggle for freedom.

Every section of public thought and organisation, including progovernment investigators repeat without a mistake, like a school lesson, the fact that the peasantry in India is poverty-stricken and debt-ridden. A general analysis of the causes of peasant poverty and starvation reveals that the peasant is exploited by government's high taxation and rent, the moneylender's exploitation and the exactions of the landowner. On the top of all this is the excessive subdivision into uneconomic fragments of land, and the merchant-trader's machine-manufactured goods entering the village, ruining the handicrafts and making hundreds into wage-earners. The moneylenders taking possession of land on failure to pay debts or the huge interest is creating landless labourers, slaves of an absentee landlord. Matched against this poverty, and land-hunger, meagre, strips of a few feet worked upon by a primitive plough and rickety bullock stand the huge unbounded estates of the talukdars, zamindars and rajahs of Bengal, Bihar and UP exacting tributes and high rent from their tenants and spending their loot in the cities of the land or elsewhere. Such idlers living on the incomes derived from the peasants' toil are a crore in the 22 crore dependent on agriculture, but they hold more than 70 per cent of the whole land in their possession and their levy on the peasantry amounts to the huge figure of 190 crore. In Bengal alone the landlords pay 2½ crore in revenue but they make more than 13 crore on mere idling and holding the scrap-paper of title to the land. Where the landlords are absent, as in ryotwari, the government takes almost whatever the peasant produces in rent. And apart from this, he is saddled with indirect taxation, which he does not see but feels. The effect of all this that a handful of five per cent of the whole people own nearly 30 per cent of the wealth of the land, while 60

per cent of the people, mostly poor peasants and workers, get only 30 per cent of the wealth, i.e. half of what they ought to have. No wonder, the result is that the bitterness in social relations, the class cleavage between the excessively rich and the excessively poor is growing and the inevitable contradictions between their interests is becoming clearer.

Recognising where this class cleavage would lead to and partly dictated by the needs of their own position, the government has started taking stock of the potential resources of the peasantry and accentuating reconstruction of Indian agriculture on the capitalist basis. This would temporarily raise the productive power of the individual peasant and thus make him a better consumer of industrial products and help the British heavy industries to their feet again. But it would again embitter the class struggle more by creating peasant unemployment and the expropriation of the poor peasant of his holdings. The Reserve Bank will replace the village moneylender and the consolidation bills will create rich farmers but the grip of the state, allied with rich zamindars and farmers, will be more thorough in its exploitation and will aggravate the struggle.

The Workers and Peasants Party therefore unequivocally stands for giving land to the peasant-cultivator, eliminating all idlers living on the tributes from the peasants. Uneconomic holdings must be made economic, not by capitalist consolidation and looting the poorest peasant but by adding to the share of the poor holder from the big limitless stretches of the absentee landlords. The party stands for allowing none to exploit him by way of interest on debts or tributes or free labour. He must be absolved from all compulsory obligation including high rent and the heavy load on his produce. He must be under obligations to none but the state, representing his own interests and himself.

Therefore to achieve this ultimate aim in view, and to widen the outlook and develop capacities of class-conscious resistance on the part of the peasantry, the party adopts the following program of immediate needs:

- (1) Elimination of all mid-agencies between the peasant and the state.
- (2) Direct representation of the peasant on the state apparatus, through an adult universal franchise, working through peasant panchayats.
- (3) Immediate provisions of land from big estates.
- (4) Substantial reduction in rent.
- (5) Review of the debt and interest obligations through peasant courts with a view to their extinction.
- (6) State credit to the peasants.

The party makes it clear that the above are merely immediate demands, which are ultimately to lead to a swaraj of unexploited and free peasant and worker, each working his own destiny, unhampered by zamindars or money-lenders or an imperialist government or a capitalist investor. The party is willing to cooperate with every organisation working for the realisation of the above demands, with a view to ultimately secure a social reconstruction to emancipate the peasant. All the same, it does not countenance the reversion to medieval forms of labour or addition of work to the peasant's life, but is radical, scientific and advance-guard in political, social and economic matters.

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## 18. ORGANISATION

If the Workers and Peasants Party is to fulfil its role, to form correctly and carry out successfully its decisions, it must pay far more attention than hitherto to organisation. The political effect of the party, and its ability to carry out its main function, that of leadership, depends very largely on its state of organisation. Thoroughly organised, even if numerically weak, the party can become a power to be



reckoned with in the industrial and political world. Without this condition energy will be wasted, and the movement which the party attempts to lead will remain chaotic and ineffective.

(1) The party must be [organised] on such a basis that decision can be easily transmitted, correctly understood and quickly put into effect.

(2) It must be able to remain constantly in touch with the masses; and to ascertain quickly all their trends of thought and action.

(3) It must be able to participate actively in the everyday struggle of the masses, to show them the value of the party, and to rally them to itself.

(4) It must be able to receive, train and organise in its ranks those who agree with its policy and want to help it.

#### *Plan of Organisation:*

Subject to alteration upon the establishment of the All-India Workers and Peasants Party, the following should be the plan of organisation:

(1) There shall be an enlarged executive committee representing all branches and affiliated bodies, and an executive committee consisting of members resident within a short distance from the central office.

(2) Branches should be set up in towns, districts, subdivisions and villages under the direction of the executive committee.

(3) Groups set up in factories, railways, mines, etc. should work on factory committees.

(4) Fractions of groups should be set up in trade-union branches, management committees, executive committees, etc. and also in provincial congress committees. This applies to the TUC and AICC.

(5) A definite youth organisation should be brought into being to work in the existing youth movement, trade unions and congress committees, etc.

(6) A women's section must be set up to work among women and organise them where possible in trade unions, and in special women's organisations.

#### *Operation of Organisation:*

(1) Study circles must be started forthwith in order that members may understand and correctly apply party policy. The study circle should begin under the leadership of a member approved by the branch or EC as capable. He must submit a report at the end of the course of study on the work of the group and the progress of each individual.

(2) It is essential that all committees, branches and fractions should meet regularly, and keep up to date with current events. The executive committee must meet at least every two weeks and branches and fractions or groups every week.

(3) The entire branch membership shall be grouped in accordance with their special party work, e.g., in trade-union groups, congress groups, peasants groups, etc. Each member must belong to at least one group. Each group shall appoint a group leader, who shall be responsible to the central or branch committee according to size.

(4) Fractions or working groups must elect a group leader who shall be responsible to the central or branch committee. These fractions must carry out the decisions of an higher body. These decisions will be conveyed to the group by the group leaders. After discussion and decision by the group or fraction on a resolution or nomination for official position, etc. the decisions of the group must be binding on the whole of the group. The work of the party groups within the trade unions and congress committees shall in the main be guided by the program and policy of the party. The demands of the party must be pressed forward for acceptance by these bodies, it is important that adherents and new members be gained and the propaganda of the party thus advanced. This applies to groups operating in the TUC and AICC.

(5) *Branch Committees:* The branch committee shall coordinate the entire work of the town or village and be responsible to the executive committee to which it must report all work, and receive instructions on general lines of policy, which it should convey to the groups.

(6) *Executive Committee:* This committee shall coordinate the whole party activity. It conveys instructions on policy to the branches, groups, etc. and must receive report regularly from branches, groups etc., on work done, future meetings of organisations, election of officers, etc. The executive committee shall have power to deal with all problems, and to issue manifestos and leads in the name of the Workers and Peasants Party.

(7) *Committees Elected:* Branch committees and office bearers shall be the chairman, secretary, executive members and treasurer, who shall be elected by the whole branch membership and with group leaders shall constitute the EC of branch.

(8) *The Executive Committee:* This committee shall be elected by an annual meeting of representatives, elected by party branches and groups affiliated organisations.

*Reporting:* It is essential that group and fraction leaders report after each meeting of their group or fraction, or more often, if necessary, on work done, future work, difficulties, new developments etc. The reports should go to branch committee and thence to the EC. The correct formulation of policy and concentration of energy by the branch and by the whole party, depends upon accurate and complete knowledge of the situation, obtainable only from such reports.

*Training:* New members admitted to the party as individuals should be incorporated in study circles as soon as possible. The EC should prepare an outline syllabus suitable for a short course of such study.

*Fraction:* Should be set up in all existing trade unions, congress committees, youth organisations, peasants' unions and branches of same.

*Groups:* Branch committees and EC must divide work into suitable groups, which shall coordinate the work of fractions, study groups, etc.

**Meetings:** In order to push forward work, and maintain contact, party meeting of all kinds must take place far more regularly and frequently than hitherto. All committees and groups should meet weekly at a fixed time and place.

**Membership:** The basis of individual membership shall be the acceptance of the party program, the payment of dues, and the performance of organised work. Admission should be subject to the approval of the EC.

**Affiliated Bodies:** Particular attention must be paid to affiliated unions and peasants' associations. Affiliation to the party must be made a reality to the members of the union. Branches of the union should be affiliated to the local branch of the party and close relations established. Party members must undertake the political education of the affiliated members, and must assist the organisation especially at periods of struggle. Fraction building within the affiliated body must be carried on vigorously, as the only guarantee for the hold of the party policy upon the organisation is the existence within it of a strong fractions of party members.

**Discipline:** It is essential for party work that individuals should observe the requirements of a party discipline. Decisions once taken by the appropriate organ of the party, must be obeyed.

*A Call to Action,*  
Meerut Record, P 523

## 19. WORKERS AND PEASANTS PARTY IN PUNJAB

I begin with WPP Punjab first (the Workers and Peasants Party of the Punjab came into being on 12 April 1928). The need of this party for the workers and peasants was shown in the *Gurmukhi Kirti* as far back as April 1927 (P 746). No organisation can come into life unless objective conditions are ripe for it. The noncoope-

ration movement had failed because the Congress had betrayed the peasants by passing the now famous Bardoli resolution and taking sides with the landlords and zamindars. The hindu-muslim fights were going on and it was peasants and workers who were suffering most in the communal fight. In order to put a stop to this fratricidal strife and make the people realise that, be they hindus or muslims, sikhs or parsees, their interests were identical, some hindu, sikh and muslim workers who detested these communal strife and wanted to put an end to them by organising the masses without any differentiation of creed or religion and by putting forward common demands, gathered together at my initiative, in the Jalianwala Bagh, Amritsar, and founded this party. The formation of this party came about not because of the wire-pulling of somebody but because there was in the Punjab no organisation based on economic realism to represent the interests of the workers and peasants. I was thinking of forming some party that will put forward an economic program of the workers and peasants when my attention was drawn towards the activities of the workers and peasants parties of Bombay and Calcutta. I, along with some other friends, therefore, made up my mind to form a party approximately on the lines of those parties. This is the history of the birth of the Punjab Workers and Peasants Party.

#### *Activities:*

The Punjab WPP held its second conference at Lyallpur as the invitation card (P 766) shows it. The first conference, of which I was the president, took place at Hoshiarpur as P 746, the *Gurmukhi Kirti* of October 1927, shows it. I was one of those who took prominent part in holding the workers and peasants conference at Lyallpur on 28, 29 and 30 September 1928. S. A. Dange was to preside, but he could not come owing to the strike obtaining in Bombay. I sent invitation letters to Kedarnath (P 766), to Mirajkar (P 1234), to Dange (P 1608) and (P1641), to Ghate (P 1642), to Muzaffar Ahmad (P 2052) and to Spratt (P. 549 [17]) and P 2079 is the same thing as P 2052, ask-

ing them to attend the conference. Only Kedarnath attended it, others could not come.

We deliberately held the second workers and peasants conference at Lyallpur because the influence of the Zamindara League was very strong there and the peasants of that district were completely under the control of the big landlords and sahuikars. Our object in holding the conference there was to free the peasants from the leadership of the landlords and sahuikars and to show the Zamindara League in its true colours. The proceedings of this conference are not fully reported. As the general secretary of the party I can claim that we did succeed to a great degree in our object. The peasants came in large numbers to attend the conference. The Punjab provincial political congress which was holding its session at that time refused to give us the use of their pandal. We were therefore forced to hold the conference in the open, the result was that after a short time of our starting the conference the congress pandal became empty because the peasants left the conference of the Congress and came to us. The congress people became very furious with us over this affair. We passed many resolutions there. The conference was a great success.

The third session took place at Rohtak. The workers at Rohtak had taken permission from me, as the general secretary to the Punjab party, to hold the conference. Arjun Lal of Ajmere was the president of this conference. P 1468 is my speech there. This speech is not fully reported. At some places it is misreported but it fairly well gives my views. I spoke against the philosophy of predestination and emphasised the fact that man as well as a class is the architect of his own fate. I divided the class into the rich and the poor according to the Marxian teachings and showed that their interests were antagonistic to each other. I clearly put my position when I said that the workers and peasants wanted neither a white bureaucracy nor a brown one but they wanted the government of the workers and peasants. I told the audience in plain words that unless the land-hunger of the peasants was satisfied,

no change for the better could take place in the bad conditions of the peasantry.

Many thousand peasants attended the conference and in my opinion it created a very good impression amongst them.

Besides these activities the Workers and Peasants Party organised many meetings in conjunction with the Naujawan Bharat Sabha. Almost every speech of mine emphasises the fact that it is the workers' movement that can really bring salvation to the country. The "Friends of Russia Week", I definitely know (though not reported in P 1910 T), was celebrated under the auspices of the WPP as well.

Besides many processions were taken out under the leadership of the party. The Press Workers' Union, Amritsar, Motor Drivers' Union and some other small unions of the workers were formed by the party.

At the inception of the party Raizada Hansraj was elected president, but when found out after a short time that he was a congressman, he was chucked out of the party. It was decided afterwards by the party to have no president at all. Only general secretary and secretary were made responsible for the carrying out of the injunctions of the party.

Five men were elected at the time of the formation of the party to frame rules and regulations. One or two of them could not or did not take part for reasons best known to them. The rules and regulations (P 344) were duly passed by the executive committee of the party and were printed under its orders for explaining the objects and aims of the party. The opposition came, as expected, from the capitalists, landlords and their agents.

The Workers and Peasants Party was not a communist body. It was an independence party in the real and full meaning of the term. There is no denying the fact that a number of communists were working side by side with the noncommunists in the party. The party aimed at the establishment of the national democratic independence

through revolution. It was openly a revolutionary body of the militant workers and peasants, who being disillusioned by the congress defeatist politics, had risen in revolt against it. It had nothing to do with the Congress and was in no way connected with, or under the influence of the Congress. In fact this was a party diametrically opposed to the Congress and was undermining the influence of the Congress in order to wrest the leadership of the workers and peasants from its hands. No man professing to be a congressman was allowed to use the platform of the party.

The party struck root because the peasants were dissatisfied with the existing zamindara leagues and besides there was no organisation to put forward the class demands of the workers and peasants. The Lahore Zamindara League was an affair of the few individuals of Lahore who would go once in a while to the village people to grind their own axe. It was a force in 1907 when Sardar Ajit Singh was the leader of this movement. After him the League remained only on paper. Charges of embezzlements were levelled against it, of late, by many peasants. Now it is only a bogus organisation having no following or membership. Nothing more nothing less.

The zamindara leagues were not class organisations. They are of the class collaborationist nature. The Workers and Peasants Party was a body based on class struggle. The party had its branches at the Ludhiana, Rohtak and Bengal Kirti Dal in Calcutta and was making great headway when I was arrested.

The activities of the WPP Punjab were open and above-board. There was nothing of conspiratorial nature about it. It was never made illegal. Its activities were being published in the press.

Extracts from Sohan Singh Josh's  
statement in the Meerut case  
delivered between 18 May and 4 June 1931  
before the session's judge



## 20. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KIRTI KISHAN PARTY

In order to organise labourers and peasants a meeting was held at the Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar, on 12 April at 6 p.m. at the invitation of Bhai Sohan Singh Josh and Bhai Bhag Singhji Canadian. [The meeting] was attended by Dr Satyapal, Bhai Gopal Singhji, BA (National), M.A. Majid, Raizada Hansraj, MLC, Lala Kedarnath Sehgal, Feroze Din Mansur, Master Kabul Singh, Lala Ram Chandra, BA, and several others numbering over 60 persons from the North-West Frontier Province, and the different districts of the Punjab. In order to conduct formal proceedings Raizada Hansraj was elected to preside over the meeting.

Afterwards it was unanimously passed that a party should be established the object (lit. work) of which should be to organise the peasants and workers, that it should be called the "Kirti Kisan Party" and that those present should be regarded as its members. After this Bhai Sohan Singh Josh was elected as the general secretary and brother M. A. Majid, of Lahore, as the joint secretary of the party. A subcommittee consisting of the following members was appointed to (draw up) rules and regulations: (1) Lala Kedarnath Sehgal; (2) Brother M. A. Majid; (3) Gopal Singhji, BA (National); (4) Gyani Hira Singh Dard and (5) Sohan Singh Josh.

We hope that after framing rules and regulations soon some practical program will be started to organise the workers and peasants.

Editorial Note: *Kirti* (Urdu) of May 1928  
Tr. Morid Hussain, court translator

## 21. THE WORKERS AND PEASANTS PARTY OF DELHI AND UP

After the noncooperation days there prevailed some political depression in the country. The leaders in their pride of the leadership forgot the masses altogether instead

of training and leading them to action. Just about the same time some responsible men started to organise the workers and peasants parties in the different provinces such as Bombay, Bengal and the Punjab according to changed condition of the world and country in particular.

In this province (UP) also some people who believed in the new and social ideas were working and agitating this new social ideas in their individual capacity but there was no organised party in this province. Comrade Spratt, Muzaffar Ahmad from Calcutta, Kedarnath Sehgal and Comrade Abdul Majid and Sohan Singh Josh from the Punjab attended the Workers and Peasants Party's congress which was held in Meerut. In consultation with these and local leaders a provincial party was organised. The following gentlemen were elected the officer leaders: *President*: Vishwanath Mukherjee (Gorakhpur), *vice-president*: Dharambir Singh, MLC (Meerut), *Secretary*: Pooran Chandra Joshi (Allahabad).

The following branches were organised: Delhi—secretary—Firoj Din Mansur, Meerut—secretary—Gourishankar, Jhansi—secretary—Krishan Gopal Sharma, Gorakhpur—secretary—Vishwanath Mukherjee.

The fee for the intellectuals will be Re 1 per year (?), and from the pure workers and peasants Re 1 per year (??). Beside this the worker can give the dues in the small instalments. The committee will have the power to exempt anyone from the party dues. For the present the UP Workers and Peasants Party accepts the rules and regulations of the Bengal W & P Party and afterward will accept the rules and regulations passed by the all-India workers and peasants congress which is going to be held in Calcutta in December of this year.

*The Aim of the Party*: Attainment of complete independence from British imperialism through democratisation of India based on economic and social emancipation and political freedom of men and women.

*Method*: Direct mass action.

To make it more clear the Meerut conference passed the following resolutions.

**1. Political Resolutions:**

(a) *The Coming War.* This conference openly declares that the workers and peasants will not help the government in the coming war, nor will they join the army in order to shed their blood for the government, nor will they sell their property in order to give the war loan to the government.

(b) *Bardoli.* The conference congratulates the peasants of Bardoli for their braveness and appreciates their organisational power and selfsacrifice which they showed, and it shows the way to the Indian peasants for the attainment of freedom.

(c) This conference suggests that no one in future should take part in the tea party or garden party given by the viceroy or other officials. It further shows its dissatisfaction with those who participated in those kinds of "parties".

*Nehru Committee:* (a) This conference expressed its thanks to the Nehru committee for its work for the unity of the hindus and mohammedans. (b) This conference is against the main points of this report and will carry its propaganda and work against these points. (c) Complete independence not dominion status. (d) Complete abolition of native states. (e) To work in order to remove all difficulties which will hinder the work of trade unions and give them full freedom so that it may be able to come in the same level as the trade unions of other countries. (f) Not to recognise the law "the protection of private property".

**2. Economic Resolutions:**

(a) *Tax:* This conference decides: (i) The indirect taxes should be abolished as soon as possible. A progressive income tax should be levied on and over the income of Rs 200 per month. (ii) Complete abolition of zamindari and talukdari, all land should be nationalised so that every one can enjoy the equal rights on it. (iii) Such laws should be introduced, so that land can be given in lease

to the peasants for the longer period. (iv) For this purpose primary education should be made compulsory and free.

(b) *Health*: This conference decides that hospitals, rest houses and maternity houses should be opened for the workers and peasants.

(c) *Protection of Women and Children*: This conference declares that such laws should be introduced by which (1) the women and children must not be given harmful work in the factories, (ii) no child under 12 years old allowed to work in factories, (iii) before and after birth of child one month leave of absence (two months in all) with full wages.

(d) *Factories, Buildings and Banks*: (i) All big business buildings, factories and banks should be nationalised. (ii) The government should be responsible to give work, those who are ready and fit for work. This conference decides that no worker should work more than 8-hours a day and 5½ days in a week at most. (iii) This conference decides such law should be introduced by which the workers should get at least such wages which will be able to upkeep himself in a good way; and the workers should be given his wages at most once a week.

(e) *Unemployment and Old Age*: This conference decides that in every branch of industry such laws should be brought in action by which in the time of sickness and in old age and in unemployment, etc. the workers should get full means of living, eating, etc.

(f) *Social Differences*: This conference decides that all differences, between black and white, caste and creed, hindu and muslim, men and women, should be totally abolished.

(g) *Education*: Illiteracy should be removed as soon as possible from the masses.

*Krantikari*, No 2, 24 November 1928,

Meerut. Record

## VI. Emergence of the Youth Movement

### 22. PUNJAB NAUJAVAN BHARAT SABHA

The Punjab Naujavan Bharat Sabha came into existence in the second week of April 1928 in Amritsar. Being fed up with Congress reformist politics and sick of the fights over communal questions like communal representation or the question of jhatka and halal or music before mosque or tanzeem and sangathan and tabligh or shudhi, some young workers of Amritsar belonging to all communities decided to hold a conference of the Punjab youths along with the conference of the Punjab provincial congress that was to take place under the presidentship of Mr Jawaharlal Nehru on 11, 12 and 13 April 1928. I was one of them. The conference was announced in the name of the 'Punjab Young Men's Association'. It took place and youths of all places of the Punjab came in large numbers. The young men of Amritsar and Lahore took especially prominent part in making it successful. After a long-drawn-out discussion over the name it was decided by the subjects committee to call it as the Punjab Naujavan Bharat Sabha by which name the youth organisation of Lahore that was formed some months back and was only locally known, was called. The purpose of the foundation of this youth organisation was to build up the youth movement on economic in place of communal program. The communal program was the cause of all communal fights in the Punjab. This youth movement, therefore, was a revolt against the communalism.

The prosecution is surprised at the attacks on religion or regionalism made by the members of the Naujavan Bharat Sabha. But there is nothing to be surprised at. The very aims and objects of the sabha make it abundantly

clear why attacks were launched against religionism or religiosity. The rules and regulations of the sabha (P 245 T) say:

“(a) To establish a complete independent republic of workers and peasants throughout India.

(b) To have nothing to do with communal bodies or other parties which persist in having separate communal representations and which disseminate communal ideas.

(c) To create the spirit of general toleration among the public considering religion as a matter of personal belief of men and to act upon the same fully.

(d) To organise workers and peasants.”

That is why no man of communal views was allowed to become a member of the sabha. That is why the chief plank of propoganda was anticommunalism and ‘anti-religion’.

As regards the allegation of the prosecution of ‘capturing of all the known existing youth organisations’ it is false on the face of it. With regard to Naujavan Bharat Sabha I can definitely say that the question of its ‘capturing’ cannot arise, because it was not existing before at all, but was brought into existence by us.

From the very beginning I have been a member of the sabha. From its very inception I was the president of the City Naujavan sabha, Amritsar. I was also elected president of the second provincial conference of the Naujavan Bharat Sabha, Punjab.

The Naujavan Bharat Sabha is not a communist party. It is, in fact, a revolt of the petty-bourgeoisie against the Congress leadership. While in the Lahore conspiracy cases, the prosecution, and for the matter of that the government, are trying to prove that it is a terrorist organisation, here in the Meerut case the prosecution seems to suggest that it is a communist body. But knowing the inside story as I do, I emphatically say that it is neither. This is an organisation of the petty-bourgeois or lower middle class who are oppressed by the British imperialism and who want to free themselves economically and politically

from the imperialist yoke, and in order to do so are trying to organise the workers and peasants to fight the battle of economic as well as political freedom. They realise quite well that the Congress is a bourgeois body and in spite of its professions and promises, it cannot fight for the interests of the petty-bourgeoisie, the workers and the peasants. Knowing full well that singlehanded this class cannot give a successful battle to British imperialism and thus improve its lot, they want the help of the workers and peasants—the two classes that can fight imperialism to the finish, and bring about revolution. Their aim is the establishment of the independent republic of workers and peasants because in that aim that they see the solution of their miseries and a good opening for better life. There may be half a dozen communists, more or less, and a few terrorists, if at all, in it, but that cannot make the Naujavan Bharat Sabha as a whole a communist or a terroristic body, though it cannot be denied that it certainly had and has tendencies towards socialism.

I was one of those who took a prominent part in building up this organisation, I went to various places to deliver lectures in order to form local Naujavan Bharat Sabhas. I delivered many speeches in connection with this sabha. Exhibit P 1903 T is one of them. I moved a resolution in the second conference of the Naujavan Bharat Sabha of which I was the elected president, condemning the government for the detention of some Punjabis and Bengalis under regulation III of 1818 without trial and without proving any case against them. I also deplored the attitude of the press towards the movement of real freedom. The press is in the hands of such people as are running it for the interests of the bourgeoisie or for their own interests. It is not serving the interests of the masses. It is leading our thought to such direction as cannot be useful to the emancipation of India in the real sense.

## 23. STATEMENT OF PROGRAM & POLICY OF YOUNG COMRADES' LEAGUE

### 1. *What is the Youth Movement?*

The youth movement has now been active in Bengal for some time, and has received much support and advice from its elders, but it has hitherto failed to establish itself. It has failed (a) to reach and establish contact with the masses, (b) to conduct any campaign for the real needs and grievances of the youth, (c) to break away from the ideas of the "elder statesmen" of the Congress, who in practice control most of the organisations, and to develop any new ideas of its own. A youth organisation is required which shall overcome these defects and shall do some real work on the basis of modern and correct social conceptions.

A youth movement has its main functions: (a) to combat the reactionary ideas which become crystallised in organisations run mainly by middle-aged or old men. The Indian national movement is in its thinking many years out-of-date. It is the duty of the organised youth to introduce to it ideas, policies and methods suitable to present conditions. (b) To educate and prepare the youth for the political and social work of the future. (c) To defend the special interests and needs of the younger generation. A youth organisation which does these things is entitled to the position of a genuine representative and leader of the youth.

### 2. *Our Grievances:*

We are called upon to defend the rising generation in this country from many evils and abuses. A civilised country takes special care of its youth. Our government leaves them practically without protection to nature and the play of economic forces. Many matters require attention, among which the chief are:

(a) *Unemployment:* The effects of unemployment fall especially hard upon the youth, whether with school or



college education, or forced to earn a living from childhood. It is not only physically and morally harmful to the unemployed but also reacts to the detriment of the conditions of those at work. Unemployment is a necessary concomitant of capitalism and is especially severe in so illbalanced an economic system as our own; nevertheless much can be done to minimise its evils. In England and other European countries the unemployed are supported by the state. Why not here?

(b) *Education*: The educational system of India is acknowledged to be most defective. Immense numbers of growing boys and girls receive no education at all. Even those who do, are trained by obsolete mechanical methods in useless subjects. Remember what Russia has done. A population, which ten years ago was as backward as that of India, is expected in three years more to contain no illiterate persons, old or young. Education is compulsory up to 14, and for town workers, part-time literary and vocational education up to 18. We do not want any longer to be educated in political subservience, or to be trained merely as clerks to our imperialist bosses. And our education must be universal.

(c) *Working Conditions*: Young men and women before reaching maturity need special safeguards in their work. Yet boys and girls are made to work just as long hours as adults for far less pay. In Russia youths up to 16 work only 4 hours, and up to 18 only 6 hours per day. The rest of the time is spent in school. We need also the limitation of hours, proper pay, and other conditions improved for young workers.

(d) *Social Customs*: For the physical and mental health both of the individual and of society, it is essential that many ancient and harmful customs be abandoned. It is the function of youth to see that both in theory and in practice the customs of early marriage, purdah, untouchability, etc., are abolished.

For these and many other elementary demands the youth of this country has to fight. We do not need words

but deeds. Active efforts, organisation, agitation must be undertaken on a great scale, and we appeal to all those young men and women who know the difficulties and trials for the young of modern life, to come forward and join us.

### **3. *What is the Remedy?***

We propose to create among the youth a mass movement and agitation for the redress of many grievances. Some reforms may be won by the pressure of the organised masses. But we know that there is no ultimate solution under the present system. This is an exploiting system, which by its very nature cannot allow decent and proper conditions for all. While pressing for redress of our immediate wrongs, we shall never forget that greater than all these are our ultimate objects. We have to work for complete independence and for the emancipation of the masses from their position of economic and political subjection—complete independence of the country from the foreign exploitation which is the root of almost all our present ills, and the complete emancipation of the masses, without which independence is both unreal and unattainable.

There are only two ways in which India can proceed, and everybody must choose between them. Either we can join the capitalists and landlords, with their exploitation, swindling and jobbery, and help to fight against and suppress the movement of the masses, and therefore inevitably ally ourselves with imperialism; or we may join the masses and fight with them for the independence of the country from imperialist and capitalist exploitation. From these two we must choose, and the young workers, peasants and oppressed and poverty-stricken of all kinds cannot but choose the path of independence and complete emancipation.

### **4. *The Ideas of Today***

In addition to fighting for its own grievances and participating in the general struggle for freedom, the youths

has a further important function. Youth is openminded it is free from the prejudices of the past, it can form and assimilate ideas suitable to the circumstances of today. It can see clearly the faults which prevented the past generations from succeeding and it has the energy to remedy them. Our country and our national movement are in the hands of old men, who are still in many cases living mentally in previous centuries, but whom the people still follow because of a harmful tradition of respect for the old and well-established.

Youth, growing up in the twentieth century, in the "epoch of wars and revolutions", can discard these relics of the past. It brings with it, in opposition to the mentality of our older leadership—

(a) *A true appreciation of our position in the world:* It abandons the old seclusion of Indian nationalism, and its rejection of all modern thought and scientific progress. It recognises that the struggle of India is but part of a world-wide struggle for freedom, and that it cannot remain isolated from the movements of other countries. It sees that India must learn to use theoretical and practical weapons which are found to be effective elsewhere. And it sees that the ultimate goal of the struggle of India for national freedom must be international.

(b) *A realistic revolutionism:* It must break away both from the timid nineteenth-century constitution-mongering of the dominant school in the nationalist movement, and from the romantic impossibilist revolutionary policy of the minority. Revolution is no longer the dream of a few isolated intellectuals, scorned by all political realists; it is an actuality, already taking place all over the world, and requiring scientific study and practical organisation.

(c) *Class-struggle as the mainspring of historical development, and the rise and organisation of the masses as the key to our problems:* Denounced or ignored by the blindness of class-interest of our old leaders, the class-struggle is to the realistic mind of youth an overwhelming fact. Before the rising organisation of the masses, our older leaders have hesitated between a policy of ignoring or

opposing it, and one of exploiting it for the wrong ends. The youth sees in the class-conscious organisation of the masses the only force which can break through the obstacles to our national progress, and the only guarantee of a united peaceful future for the people of the whole world. The youth will throw itself into the struggle on the side of the masses.

(d) *Abandonment of the traditional attitude of hero-worship*: Our movement has always paid exaggerated devotion to its leaders, and has often suffered heavily as a result. The youth will rid itself of this dangerous relic of bourgeois ideas, and will base its policies and action upon principles rather than upon personalities.

(e) *An active intolerance of the divisions and hostilities among ourselves, based upon ancient usages and customs having no reality or value at the present day*: The traditional method of dealing with communalism has proved to be useless. It is absurd to intensify communal consciousness as a means of bringing about intercommunal unity.

Youth ignores communal divisions, and bases its policy upon the identity of the real interests of all the masses.

##### 5. *What We Shall Do?*

The Young Comrades' League has been established to carry on the propaganda of these ideas and to form and lead a real movement of the exploited youth for the solution of its grievances and for the attainment of independence and freedom.

We appeal to all the young people of Bengal to join and help us in these great tasks. All around us we see poverty, misery, ignorance, unemployment, famine, destitution, insanitary housing, preventible disease, high infant mortality. We see the enormous wealth of our country monopolised and controlled by an unholy combination of our own and foreign zamindars and capitalists. They juggle with the nation's livelihood—with its very life. By the present system of legalised robbery they take from us the fruits of our labour, to drain it away to foreign countries

or to spend it in riotous extravagance. At their whim we are evicted from our dwellings or dismissed from the possibility of obtaining our livelihood. If we resist we are met with the lockout, the blacklist, the lying capitalist press, the inequality of justice, the terrorism of the police force or the capitalists' or landlords' hired thugs. At their decree we are marched off to foreign lands to fight to the death against our comrades with whom we have no quarrel; if we resist we are condemned as traitors. Above all, dominating our whole life, the embodiment and protector of capitalism and landlordism, the framework and backbone of the whole system, the instrument of foreign rule, stands the state.

The whole vast machine of exploitation and oppression, controlled by a small clique of imperialist magnates, to whom the millions of ordinary people are but instruments in their schemes of world conquest and spoliation, is a menace to the future of humanity, which must be fought and overcome by the people. Even now, it is planning and preparing a new great war of conquest, against our comrades and friends of the Soviet Republics. In this war, which may now break out at any time, many thousands of the young men of India will be used as cannon-fodder. We must warn in time the nation, and especially the youth against the danger of this coming war, and appeal to all to resolve that no Indian shall disgrace himself or his country by taking part in it, directly or indirectly.

In war or in peace, imperialism is incompatible with civilisation, with proper human relationships, with decent standards of life. We call upon all young people who feel that their lives and those of others round them are not what they should be, who are exploited or cast out to starve by an iniquitous economic system, who are denied the proper education which is the birthright of all human beings; we call upon all who want peace and not war, who want independence and not slavery, civilisation not imperialism, freedom not exploitation—Join the Young Comrades' League and fight for them!

6. Our program of practical work for the immediate future is as follows:

(a) To launch by means of public meetings and other propoganda a campaign for the following chief demands:

- (i) a living wage for all wage earners,
- (ii) limitation of hours for young workers (6-hour day up to eighteen),
- (iii) state support for the unemployed,
- (iv) universal primary education, compulsory physical and military training in schools, improved facilities for technical education,
- (v) abolition of the practices of early marriage, untouchability, purdah etc.

(b) To establish study-circles in economic and political subjects.

(c) To organise public meetings and debates and to publish material relating to our economic, political and social problems.

(d) To cooperate with the trade-union movement in the organisation of young workers, and to initiate the organisation on similar lines of the youth of the villages.

(e) To establish solidarity among the various youth organisations and to initiate united work for common objects.

(f) To publish and distribute an organ for the youth.

(g) To recruit new members.

(h) To study youth movements, the working and other conditions of young workers, and other political and economic questions, to collect data and form a library.

## VII. The Strike Upsurge of 1928 and the Emergence of the Militant TU Movement

### 24. BOMBAY TEXTILE GENERAL STRIKE OF 1928

I took no part in the strikes that took place before January 1928. It was only in January that I went to the mill area along with Mr Bakhale, with whom I was a joint secretary of the All India Trade Union Congress. Mr Bakhale negotiated the Spring Mill strike and I was present on one or two occasions at these interviews with the management. That strike was partially successful. But we could do nothing in the Sassoon Mill strike. There was no room there for compromise and negotiations. I found that due to my ignorance at that time of the intricacies of the industry, the burdens on the working class and such other things that a unionist ought to know, I could be of no use to the strike. So I ceased to take an active part in the strike and retired to acquaint myself thoroughly with all facts of the situation. Moreover, I found hesitation amongst the other leaders as to the course to be recommended to the workers. There was one trend that argued that without a general strike these grievances would not be solved, there was another trend which argued that as the grievances were not felt by a sufficiently wide mass, the general strike would not come about and succeed. The Bombay Textile Labour Union issued a statement on 8 January 1928 in the name of Mr N. M. Joshi disapproving of the idea of general strike. That statement was not wholly against the general strike as such. Mr Joshi had seen and taken part in two big general strikes and even as a moderate trade unionist he could not be expected to oppose the general strike on principle. What he did was to oppose it on the ground of possibility, feasibility and possi-

ble success. Being out of touch with the rank and file of the fighting workers and not believing as we do in the immense power of the proletariat, he doubted their capacity, solidarity and intelligence. All these doubts are typically put in one sentence of his statement. He says: "As regards the present strike I feel sure that there is a possibility of its spreading, although I may not wish it, if no satisfactory solution is found out almost immediately. And I do feel that a general strike under the existing conditions may fail. There is a very large number of workers who are not yet affected by the new system and they may not come out and even supposing they come out they may not hold out long enough to make the general strike a success. I would not therefore risk a general strike if I feel that it would fail." (D 567 and D 390, *AITUC Bulletin*, April 1928, p 111).

That settled the attitude of the Bombay Textile Labour Union and the large section of workers in a group of mills which were under its influence.

But the largest section of the workers in the most crowded part of the mill area were under the influence of the GK Mahamandal. The Sassoon Mill strike was led by the GKM. The GKM reflected the opinion of the most advanced group of workers in the mills. Though not possessing an up-to-date well-kept organisation the Mahamandal, with a membership varying between four and six thousands, had a sufficiently wide organisation and contact. The Mahamandal did not take up the idea of the general strike in January. And when a statement in the press in the name of the Workers and Peasants Party was issued in January 1928 stating that the millowners wanted to crush the workers section by section in order to avoid a determined resistance as was given in 1924 and 1925, and that only a general strike could stop the rationalisation and wagecut drive, the Mahamandal did not take up that statement seriously (P 928 and 1016, and D 519). This was quite in keeping with the workers' mood at that time. The Sassoon strike had not broken down, the attack in the mills were not yet very evident. The plans of the millowners were not yet thoroughly known; therefore it was that the GKM in its leaflet said:



**“Men in those factories in which no change has taken place should continue their work and help the men in the E.D. Sassoon Company by taking them as substitutes by turns and by collecting contributions.”** Strikers were asked not to go and demonstrate near the other mills which were working (D 439/33).

Till the Sassoon group strike was on and others had not taken place this mentality prevailed. With the BTLU and the Mahamandal both against the general strike, it was impossible for any group of persons to bring about a general strike, because the two organisations put together and agreed on a point meant the opinion of the textile workers. In a handbill (issued between 13 and 24 February 1928) the Mahamandal wrote “Men in those mills in which no sort of change has been effected should strengthen themselves by continuing their work” and asked the workers to taboo the proposal of a general strike coming from “nondescript upstarts” unless it came from the Mahamandal which “If it is thought proper to declare a general strike will give public notice to all to that effect” (D 439/30).

The tactic of localised strikes failed, the Sassoon workers were beaten and the millowners commenced the second instalment of their attack just as was predicted by those “nondescript upstarts”. The effect of this was at once reflected in the Mahamandal. The workers began to consider seriously whether it was possible to stem the advancing attacks by isolated strikes. The Mahamandal in a handbill says (about 26 March 1928) “As the strike in the Sassoon group was broken other owners have begun to foist upon the workers the system of three looms and two frames. So also attempts to cut down wages are being made by resorting to various stratagems... We workers cannot be able to cope up with this unless in the end we all become one and tenaciously declare a general strike” (P 1464 which is same as D 439/31). The words “in the end” and “future general strike” still express hesitation to recommend unequivocally the general strike as the only weapon, because the workers themselves were hesitating and not a very large section of them was yet convinced that they were being at-

tacked as the result of a general plan of the textile bourgeoisie. They still thought that all the wagecuts and new systems of work were the freaks of individual owners and therefore the strikes would be localised to those individual mills. On 1 April 1928 the Mahamandal issued a statement asking the workers of the textile mill to resume work and removing some of the misunderstanding prevalent in the workers about spinners' wages (D 497). The workers resumed work on 3 April (vide Fawcett Report and PW 244) but came out again on 7 April as they were asked to clean machinery every day which was not the former practice, and to drop tickets. The Simplex Mill strike could not be negotiated and the Kastoorchand Mill came out on 3 April, the same day on which the Textile Mill resumed work. The Simplex Mill was in the Jacob Circle area, a mill doing very skilled silk work in weaving, the Kastoorchand Mill was at Dadar and the Textile Mill at Parbhadevi, three situated at long distance from each other, which meant a great difficulty in organisation and control of the strike by the financially poor Mahamandal. This guerrilla tactic of the millowners, the fruitlessness of the isolated struggle for the last six months naturally had their effect on the GKM. Hesitation and vacillation gave way. The three strikes shook the Mahamandal ideology and they had to accept the viewpoint held by the WPP as early as January 1928. On 9 April 1928, the GKM issued a handbill saying "You are aware that this danger and the wicked attack of the owners on wages cannot be averted without a general strike" (P 1465-PW 245). It also said, "in every mill the owners with the intention of devising means for reducing the worker's wages by 25 per cent are resorting to one or other of devices..."

[SW 3, pp 46-50]\*

### *Formation of Joint Strike Committee*

It has been already stated that the general strike action

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\* All references in square brackets are to S. A. Dange, *Selected Writings*, Vol 3.

began on 16 April 1928. The workers on strike organised processions and meetings. On 18 a strike committee was formed. On the next day the Bombay Textile Labour Union which had kept aloof from the strike appointed its own strike committee and refused to accept our committee. But the strike committee of the BTL Union was merely a watching committee. The membership of the BTLU mainly came from the Mohammedan weavers in the Madanpura area, the Kurla Mills and a few workers from other mills. The skilled weavers of the BTLU had not been yet hit by wagecuts and so there was no driving force for the strike from that section. The BTLU was the last union in the world to preach militant solidarity to the workers and ask them to strike. It did not fight strikes but negotiated them with "goodwill" which invariably turned out to be good for the bourgeoisie and ill for the workers. Still the BTLU was financially strong, with a reserve of more than Rs 10,000 and was in a position to command some more funds if necessary from the welfare organisations with which it had connections. The GKM and the militant strike committee of the strikers had not more than Rs 100 and their organisers could scarcely pay their conveyance for organisation of the workers.

From 16 onwards the mills began to stop one by one. On 23 April the police opened fire on a mass of the workers in the Sewri area. One of the workers by name Parasuram Jadhav died of gunshot wounds on the spot. Contrary to the expectations of the police the firing did not break the strike but strengthened it. It aroused the solidarity of the workers. It made them indignant. The firing showed them that the police, the government and the millowners who had sought the help of the police were one and that the workers must stand as one against them. The conservative anti-strike BTLU even was overrun by the strike feeling and all the mills closed down by 26 April 1928 (PW 245).

During this time serious negotiations were going on between the BTLU and us on the question of forming a joint strike committee and presenting a united front to the mill-owners. BTL Union was opposed to calling a general strike,

but once the strike was an accomplished fact and even its own sections were involved in it, its main grounds for keeping aloof from us vanished. Though we possessed the leadership of the strikers, we had no finances to guide and keep such a huge organisation going. We also wanted unity with the 30,000 workers who were more or less under the influence of the BTLU. Unity at that time with those confirmed Genevites and class collaborators would have strengthened the strike. Unity with them at that time meant a unity of one section of workers with another section and not merely a unity between leaders. A large section of workers by their own experience had yet to be convinced that our policy was the only right policy. Unity with the BTLU at that time gave us the opportunity to demonstrate the correctness of our policy and secure large contacts and financial strength, without in any way making us lose our direction of affairs and the right to criticise if necessary our allies. Therefore steps were taken to form a joint strike committee which ultimately was done on 2 May. The joint strike committee consisted of 30 members, 15 from the BTLU—Mr Joshi's section, and 15 from our section which had advocated the militant policy and was in the thick of the fight. It appointed two joint secretaries and two joint treasurers and in order to avoid a possible cause of friction it never appointed a permanent president of the joint strike committee as such. Those of the members of that joint strike committee who are now prisoners in this case are all from that section which advocated and fought for the general strike till the workers' demands were granted.

The first thing that the joint strike committee did was to send to the Millowners' Association a formal draft of the demands of the strikers which it did on 3 May 1928 (PW 234 & D 3). It has already been shown that these demands were known to the millowners before the general strike informally because all of them at one time or another had been issues in the several individual strikes that took place prior to the general strike. I have already dealt with this aspect.

*“Russian Money”*

We had also to meet another attack, this time from the petty-bourgeois nationalist public and some pseudo-trade-unionists. It was on the question of the money for relief received from the Russian textile trade unions. According to the prosecution evidence, on 28 April 1928 \$ 7690 were sent by the Deutsche Bank, Berlin, acting on behalf of M. Voronoff to the Bombay branch of the National City Bank of New York to be paid to Mr S. H. Jhabwala, vice-president, Bombay Textile Labour Union (P 1542, PW 231). This telegram was received by the Bombay branch on 30 April. In the usual course the bank makes an enquiry about the person and his credentials to receive the money. The prosecution witness stated that he did not know who made the enquiry in this case. However on the same date the City Bank wired back that as Mr Jhabwala was not a vice-president of the BTLU, fresh instructions were required (P 1543). It is to be noted that the bank did not say that they could not trace Mr Jhabwala. It did not consult the BTLU because Mr Jhabwala was a vice-president of the BTLU when this telegram was received. Then why was such an obviously false telegram sent? The explanation is that probably the government was afraid to give the money in the hands of a person who at that time was working on the lines of militant leftwing trade-unionism and was still a member of the WPP. Allowing such a large sum to go to the strikers through a WPP man meant helping the WPP, the communists and trade-union radicals to consolidate their influence. The joint strike committee with its “safety valves” of moderate had not yet come into existence. The police and government were yet undecided on their attitudes. They wanted to take a chance with Voronoff and the Russian trade unions, whom they expected to withdraw the remittance after hearing that Mr Jhabwala was not the vice-president of the BTLU. But Voronoff and the Russian trade unions valued the interest of the workers more than the name. They wanted to give relief to the workers no matter through whom it reached, if in the first instance it

could not reach through a person who was nearer to the workers. On 7 May the bank was instructed to pay the sum to Mr N. M. Joshi, president of the BTLU, and the government was confronted with the problem of the Soviet trade unions sending money to a "yellow man" for the relief of the workers. Meanwhile the joint strike committee had come into existence. The two wings had united and government played the tactic of making the Moderate group the financial arbiter of the strike by handing over the money on condition that it shall not be given into the hands of the WPP men. On 9 May 1928 Mr N. M. Joshi received Rs 20,916-12 (P 1546) and it was given by instalments to the joint strike committee for purchasing corn for relief of the workers. Every pie of the sum was spent on relief.

The next day the whole nationalist and imperialist press splashed full-page headlines like "Red Money for Bombay Strike" and "Bolshevik Gold for Bombay Strikers". The bourgeoisie abused the government for having allowed the money to pass on and the patriots fell foul of Mr Joshi. Mrs Besant from Madras denounced him and asked the excellent question "will the bond of sympathy thus established in a period of privation be allowed to weaken?" The answer to this will be given by the heroic working class of India when the imperialists of the world will raise their armed hand against the workers' republic. Mr C. F. Andrews gave an interview in Colombo in which he said that "he had no objection to receiving such money in times of distress, but to receive money from the Third International for strike purpose was quite a different proposition. The Third International openly advocated violence and class war and was opposed to constitutional trade-unionism which it tried to wreck. Therefore, he could not conscientiously welcome money from that quarter" (Colombo 30 May 1928, D 518). This most truthful and christian gentleman, the follower and prosperous biographer of another most truthful and christlike gentleman Mahatma Gandhi, started by telling the lie that the money was sent by the Third International. Secondly this man, who had dabbled with the most stubbornly fought Kharagpur strike in 1927

and knew that that strike had also received help from the Soviet trade unions now finds that times of distress and times of strike are not the same things, as if the workers on strike are less starved than those in famine! He made this distinction probably because he remembered that the Gujarat flood relief committee had taken the help received from the Communist Party of Great Britain (P 1381). So to condemn receiving help from communist sources at all times would have carried its own exposure. Thirdly, this gentleman, who abhorred class war, was himself paid by the Imperial Citizenship Association of Bombay, an organisation of the Indian bourgeois interests in Africa, to carry on incessant propaganda on their behalf to support the class war between the white settlers and the Indian merchants and workers in Africa. Paid by the millowners of Bombay, he was willing to wage the class war of the Indian merchants against the negroes and the white settlers, there in Africa, but in India he attributed the flaring up of class war to the Third International and abhorred it!

When Mrs Besant had spoken against the money, her spiritual son Mr Shiva Rao from Madras naturally followed suit. Still it must be said to the credit of Mr N. M. Joshi, that he did not waver in his attitude towards this money. He gave an interview to the press that he was not opposed to receiving and using money from whatever source it came for the relief of the strikers. He stood for the right of the workers to receive help from the international proletariat and asked the bourgeoisie whether it was not trading with Russia and receiving profits of red roubles. This interview silenced the storm for a time. It showed how the petty-bourgeois intellectuals and saints, apparently not belonging to the big bourgeoisie, all the same engaged in its class service and sabotaged the struggle of the workers and even aided the imperialist government in cutting off the help coming to them from the international working class.

Another disillusionment came from the Bombay Municipal Corporation. This body is dominated by the millowners, the merchants and the petty-bourgeois voters paying rent of Rs 10 and over. A resolution was brought before

them that Rs 100,000 be sanctioned for opening some relief work for the strikers. The resolution was lost. The workers were a bit surprised. In 1925 this corporation had sanctioned a like sum, but in 1928 this was refused. Because in 1925 the Bombay bourgeoisie was using the strike to get the excise duty removed and had strong hopes of success, in 1928 it had no such hopes, and wanted the strike to be smashed outright. In 1925 the workers were not led in a manner that acted on clearcut class lines. At that time there was not much harm in giving relief. The workers who had come to look upon the corporation as a body not entirely opposed to them as a class, speedily revised their viewpoint. They knew from this single act that the corporation belonged to none but the bourgeoisie.

Thus by their own experience the workers saw that those middle-class layers who posed as pro-labour and repudiated all suggestions that they too were a part of the bourgeoisie, were really chips from the same bourgeois block and in times of an acute class struggle never forget their parentage. The imperialist state, the big bourgeoisie, the police, the municipal corporation, the nationalist and imperialist press and petty-bourgeois saints and breeders of world teachers, all of them ranged themselves against the Bombay workers for the simple reason that they had refused to produce surplus value for the bourgeoisie. They saw the Marxian truth, "the emancipation of the working class shall be its own task."

Accordingly the workers stiffened their attitude. They received their outstanding wages and such of them as had homes or relations in the country left Bombay before the end of May. The joint strike committee obtained concessions from Cooperative Steam Navigation Company to the extent of 25 per cent of the fares to the coastline places. But no concession could be obtained from the railways. It was estimated that about 80,000 workers had left Bombay. Others were either completely proletarianised or had no means to go to their homes, which were far out on the railway lines.



***Making Way for Negotiations—Registration  
of the Girni Kamgar Union***

However, we did not neglect to take steps to make the way of compromise easier. The millowners were not willing to negotiate with unregistered trade unions. They had given out this as an excuse for not negotiating with us. Because they expected that as some of us were communists we would refuse to do anything that the millowner would want us to do and refuse to get our union registered under the law of the government. But the millowners had misjudged in this respect. We were quite willing to have our union registered if that alone stood in the way of settlement. We were perfectly sure that the registration of our union would not remove the difficulties at all. So when this excuse was very much relied upon as the real difficulty in the way, during our talks with the general member of the government of Bombay, we immediately proceeded to get the Girni Kamgar Mahamandal registered. The name of the GKM since the split between the secretary and the president was used by both the factions. When we went to the registrar's office to get it registered we found that the former secretary had already registered the name for his faction (21 May) and the registrar could not register it in our name (PW 245). This was a difficulty of first rate importance and caused a serious crisis amongst the group of those organisers who were so long working under the banner of the Mahamandal. They had cherished the Mahamandal since 1923. It had grown in the general strike in 1924. It had fought through the 1925 strike and now they were asked to surrender and bury that name in the midst of the third general strike, simply because some dirty law had registered that name for a handful of persons opposed to the general strike while the real flower of the GKM was in the full swing of the strike. A mere trick of law and of the registrar, they said, was not going to deprive them of those traditions and the credit of the work of the last five years. If they were out to fight the powerful bourgeoisie they could as well neglect this trick of the law and

go without it and stick to the Mahamandal as their own and nobody else's. It was the simple logic of the worker, who was not willing to surrender the name and register under another simply to please the millowners and open a way for negotiations. For two days the fight went on. We suggested that a new union be formed and registered. If we were the real workers of the Mahamandal it mattered very little who carried away the name, so long as the true traditions and the workers remained with us. We would remain the same powerful body if we worked vigorously and would create the same respect, credit and leadership for the new union. When ultimately the leading workers were won over to the idea of taking up a new name another difficulty arose over the question of admission of "non-workers" in the union. The Mahamandal had special provision in its constitution that no non-worker shall be admitted into the union and the leading workers were brought up in that idea. The reason why the Mahamandal had made such a rule is shown in a handbill issued by it (P 1462). It was a reaction to the tricks practised upon the workers by the petty-bourgeois persons that had entered trade-unionism to make a career. It was a repetition in a sense of the famous reaction of the French proletariat to the betrayal practised upon it by the Second International (socialist) leadership, when Clemenceau took ministership under the bourgeois government. The French proletariat as a result of that betrayal began to hate politics and the communists had to fight out this wrong tendency. Similar was the case with the Mandal. They distrusted all petty-bourgeois trade-unionists and distrusted us also for a time, even though they had made us their advisers. Now when they had been persuaded to form a new union they wanted to repeat the example of the Mandal and exclude us from it. We had to fight this tendency also, because it is historically necessary for the working class to use the services of the revolutionary petty bourgeois who make common cause with the proletariat and work for the working class on the basis of the program of proletarian class power. Such a petty-bourgeois

intellectual unites in him all the advantages of the bourgeoisie, of which the working class is deprived, with the revolutionary class theory of the proletariat. And as such the distrust entertained by the workers against the petty bourgeoisie as a class, though quite healthy and necessary in its class struggle, must not be allowed to be applied to each and every individual of that class without any reference to the character and ideology of the individual concerned. That would hamper the development of the party of the proletariat. Apart from these general considerations the immediate consideration was that unless we were officially in the new union we would not be in a position to control the strike and the negotiations as we would have no effective voice in the official deliberations of the union. The position was explained to the workers, and the opposition which was limited only to a small group of the GKM managing committee was overcome mainly because they knew that if they rejected us the rank and file stood with us to whom we could appeal over their heads. The Bombay Girni Kamgar Union was formed in a workers' meeting at Nagu Sayaji Wadi on 22 May 1928 and was registered the next day with a membership of 174 and a cash balance Rs 43.8.0 (P 958, minute book of GKU). About the same time Mr Jhabwala got the Mill Workers' Union registered, while the BTLU was already a registered body. Thus the joint strike committee now consisted of three registered unions. The fourth one, the Mahamandal, was opposed to the general strike, and had split away from the main body of the workers and was not therefore admitted to the joint strike committee. The new GKU office-bearers president: A. A. Alve, vice-president: Bradley, Nimbkar, Jhabwala and Tamhanekar; general secretary: myself (S. A. Dange); joint secretaries: Satum, Tawde and K. N. Joglekar; joint treasurers: B. T. Alve and S. V. Ghate. Later on Jhabwala resigned and G. R. Kasle was elected in his place (25 October 1928) and Mirajkar was elected joint secretary vice Satum resigned (25 October 1928) (P 958). The GKU has contributed 9 of its 13 office-bearers to this case.

*Help of the International Proletariat*

I will now take the question of the financing of the strike. I have already mentioned the two big sums received from the trade unions in Russia for the relief of the strikers. The imperialist and nationalist bourgeois press made much propaganda against us, feeding the petty-bourgeois public on stories of how the Reds killed the bourgeoisie in the revolution and how the money received for the strike still carries the red colour of their blood. Many patriots and reactionary feudal landlords in the assembly and elsewhere directly incited government to stop this money from being delivered or to take action against us for receiving it.

The balancesheet of income and expenditure of the joint strike committee shows a total income of Rs 1,11,527-9.11 from 7 May 1928 to 31 January 1929. The income and expenditure after 4 October, when the strike was called off, are merely readjustments and minor items. Out of this income Rs 82,238.5.5 were from foreign contributions, and Rs 26,383.6.3 is something like cross entries, being refunds of tickets and sale of gunny bags bought with corn. This shows in the first place that the largest part of help for the strikers came from the European workers. Leaving aside the refunds etc., money from foreign contributors was 75.7 per cent and from inland 24.3 per cent of all contributions as such. For every rupee received from inside the country Rs 3 were received from the European workers.

The money came from different organisations of workers in Europe. Money was sent both by the yellow and the red organisations, as the prosecution would like to classify them. It would appear from the accounts that the yellows sent Rs 43,073.0.8 and that the Reds Rs 39,165.4.9 of the total of Rs 82,238.5.5. This shows, in the second place, that the reds alone were not desirous that the strikers should be helped in their struggle. The yellows also wanted the strike to succeed, at that time at least. It may be noted that in the total of Rs 82,238.5.5, mentioned above Rs

17,660.11.0 were not received during this strike, but were the balance left over from the moneys received during the general strike of 1925 in which none of the communists here were participants. It would appear as if the innocent yellow leaders had kept this balance ready for the coming strike of the "mischievous reds"!

Now if we take the third test as to who from the strike committee, the reds or the yellows, received these moneys for the strikers, we find that Rs 18,095.5.0 only passed through the hands of two of the accused here and Rs 64,142.15.6 (?) came through Mr N. M. Joshi and his organisations. That is, 78 per cent of the "financing" of the strike came through absolutely "safest-for-the-empire" hands.

While dealing with these figures it may be remembered that though these sums by themselves look very imposing in the poverty stricken Indian conditions, where relief and charity fund collections do not swell beyond a few thousands, their importance must not be exaggerated. The collections for the Bardoli peasants' fight which was proceeding parallel to the strike did not go beyond Rs 2,00,000, when the whole of the nationalist bourgeoisie in all the provinces stood behind that movement with its men, money and press. We will be overestimating the utility of this money if we lose sight of their relation to the wages and living of the workers who were put on relief. The relief operations began from 12 June and lasted for 114 days. The round sum of Rs 95,000 spent on corn relief gives Rs 833 per day, whereas the wages of the textile workers per day which they had ceased to receive amounted to Rs 2,00,000. The relief distributed over all the workers comes to 248th part of their wages. These "tons of foreign money" against which the government and the bourgeoisie shrieked do not give more than one pie to each worker who earned Rs 1.6 per day on an average. If his family had consumed  $2\frac{1}{2}$  seers of flour a day it was being offered now a homeopathic wheat flour pill of nearabout one-fourth a tola per day for the whole family! Even supposing that the whole money was spent on the 30,000 strikers only,

who came to receive relief and were the neediest of all the workers, they received only a 38th part or 5 pies per head per day. Such a paltry sum can never explain and take the place of the selfsacrifice of the workers. It is not the tons of foreign money that encouraged the workers to fight vigorously for their demands, though it may be recognised that the help of the international working class did render partial aid in saving the very needy from complete starvation and death in many a case.

Neither did this money play any part in aiding the organisational work of the strike. The organisational expenses of the strike committee were about Rs 13,000 in round figures. The money collected inside India was double this sum, and even if the transport expenses of the exodus of the strikers from Bombay (Rs 3,810.23) were not considered as a form of relief but as a part of organisational work, the total would still be far less than the inland collections. Without money coming from outside, the inland contributions would have fully covered our organisational expenses which certainly are one of the most important demands on the resources of a strike-leading organisation.

By this analysis about the source of the moneys received and its recipients, I am not trying to take any shelter behind the fact that even the most loyal-to-imperialism organisation like the International Federation of Trade Unions and its affiliated organisations like the British Trades Union Congress or the International Federation of Textile Workers' Association sent money to help the strikers, and the largest part of it through such an excellent socialist and trade-unionist like the Lt. Hon'ble Tom Shaw who has succeeded in reconciling his socialism, which in words denounces war, with his war ministership under imperialism itself. The analysis shows partly the character of the strike of 1928 and the way it was being looked at by the world trade unions. The class struggle of the Bombay textile workers had not yet assumed a definite uncompromising form of class war fought exclusively under the leadership and influence of the red flag and all that it connotes. The workers had not yet ideologically, organi-

sationally and practically taken the definite role of revolutionary trade-unionism. The big trade-union drive that burst forth after October 1928 was not visible in even the faintest symptoms before or during the strike and the sincere determined trade-unionism of the communists was treated as the exuberance of "rusticated college students" as the *Times of India* put it. Little had the proimperialist IFTU dreamt that soon a mighty wave of organisational activity unheard of before would be set in motion by the working class in Bombay, just being awakened into class consciousness. The IFTU hoped to demolish the new leadership by financially propping up the Geneva heroes and making them appear before the workers as their saviours from hunger. Hence the great activity and sympathy shown by the IFTU and IFTWA in sending money for the textile workers.

If the desire of the IFTU had been genuine, if it had only the idea of working for the success of the workers' strike, it would not have refused help to the strike in 1929 or allowed its largest constituent, the British TUC to condemn the textile workers next year. But the IFTU's proimperialist game was lost. After the strike of 1928 the Bombay textile workers organically bound themselves on a large scale to what is signified by the red flag and naturally the IFTU, the British TUC and the IFTWA, which were all so generous in the preceding years in their appeals for help to the Bombay workers, became louder in their shrieks of hatred next year. The socialist-pacifists Tom Shaw, who previously was hurling bank drafts for the strike, was next year a war minister—mobilising "men-of-war" against the workers. But unfortunately for these gentlemen, class war does not sail on bank drafts nor does it halt for the armed pacifists who are pacifists in imperialist wars and armed against class wars.

The complaint of the Indian bourgeoisie against the imperialist government for allowing the money to come into India for the help of the strikers was quite justified. The bourgeoisie knew that the IFTU and the colonial working class cannot pull together for long; that we would soon

break up with the Genevite sweet-speakers and it also knew that the IFTU will desert but the workers of the Soviet Union will not. And if the workers of the Soviet Union are allowed to help the colonial workers, where will the bourgeoisie be? Naturally if it had to live and also appear as the nationalist leaders of the working class, it must break the Indian working class away from the USSR, away from every militant section of the world proletariat. Hence it asked for and got the public safety bill.

At the same time we are also justified in insisting on our right to take the help of the international proletariat. Capitalism has destroyed the national barriers by ramming down the Chinese walls of national isolation by its cheap commodity production, export of goods and capital. Imperialism, its next stage, by its world organisation of exploiting the working class and peasantry, has created a world society. But it has also divided the whole world into two hostile camps, the world bourgeoisie and the world proletariat. When the smallest part of this world bourgeoisie by its international contradictions threatens a collapse and thereby a danger to the world bourgeoisie, the most powerful sections of imperialism act internationally to prop up the collapsing sector though the prop does not help to save it. For example the shortage of gold of the Bank of England calls in the help of the Federal Reserve Bank of the USA. The bourgeoisie also cooperate internationally to suppress the colonial workers, as in China. As against this the world proletariat is bound to cooperate internationally, and if the working class of India is attacked in the standards of wages, whose help is it to seek but that of the world proletariat and especially of the Soviet Union? All the weak capitalist nations run to the USA, the banker of the world bourgeoisie, for help. All the oppressed workers of the world naturally run for help to the USSR the bank of freedom for the world proletariat. Possessing political power, experience, the resources of a vast country, the Soviet Union is the best fitted to help the world proletariat. In our need are we to ask help from the victorious working class of the USSR or from



the bankers of the USA? The central council of trade unions of the USSR, the Red International of Labour Unions, is for us what the council of the International Chamber of Commerce is for the world bourgeoisie with this difference that the latter suffers from cut-throat competition within itself and is the organ of a declining class while the former has no internal contradictions and is the organ of the advancing class. Knowing this the Indian bourgeoisie tries to break the solidarity of the Indian workers with those of other countries and especially with those of the USSR and knowing this we have to stand and work for the maintenance of this solidarity. It can never be destroyed by laws of banishment, prohibition of entry to money and fraternal delegates into India from the workers of other countries, because that solidarity is grounded on the organisation of modern world economy.

[SW 3, pp 154-60]

*The Organisation of the Girni Kamgar Union  
and Events up to March 1929*

The strike was called off by a monster meeting held in the Nagu Sayaji Wadi on 5 October 1928 where the agreement arrived at on the previous day with the millowners was explained. Tremendous enthusiasm prevailed and the agreement was endorsed by the workers. Almost every prominent member of the joint strike committee of both the wings was present and spoke in the meeting. A handbill over the signatures of the joint secretaries of the committee was also issued explaining the terms. It is a fact that the agreement did not remove the rational system—the three loom and two frame system—from the Sassoon, Finlay and Kohinoor mills. Nearly ten thousand workers who were directly hit by the system remained dissatisfied, and had every reason to revolt against the agreement, which they did. When on Monday morning 6 October, the mills were reopened and the workers in these groups found that they had to work under the old rational system, they considered themselves betrayed. They came out

and started a campaign to close down the mills again. Herein was going to be the test of the new leaders of the workers. In former days and even today in many cases where the reformist leadership is predominant, the rule was that when an unfavourable agreement in any respect was repudiated by the workers, the leaders decamped and refused to face the fury of the dissatisfied workers. We could not afford to do this. We had to stay with the workers, we belonged to them, wholly and solely. Therefore we went straight into the meetings of the dissatisfied workers and explained to them how the system could not be overthrown. The workers had held out for nearly six months, the millowners had agreed to the demands of almost all the workers excepting the Sassoon section and in the present conditions it was impossible to continue the struggle any longer on that sole issue. But if they insisted upon continuing the struggle we were bound to carry out their mandate; our signatures over the agreement had no value by themselves. Any agreement entered into in the name of rank and file must be endorsed by the rank and file. If they refused to endorse it must be scrapped. We had given our definite opinion and lead that work ought to be resumed. But in order to measure the exact extent of the resistance, we issued the handbill (P 966). The prosecution claim that this handbill shows that immediately after we had settled the strike, we wanted to stop the mills from working normally and therefore called upon the workers to start boycott of some of the mills. This hand-

so if necessary. The question-form of the sentence at the top, which they have failed to notice, itself shows this. It was a question, as I have said to measure the extent of the resistance to the agreement in order to aid us in deciding our line of action. The response to this handbill as we expected was negligible. After one or two meetings it became clear that the Sassoon workers also were exhausted and the majority of them were unwilling and unable to continue the struggle at that moment just then. This was quite natural. They had been the first victims of rationalisation and had been fighting for over one year. Within four days the agreement had been accepted on all sides and accepted with thorough understanding. The greatest factor in bringing about this result was the fact that the workers found that here was a leadership that was not going to desert their struggle, though it might have to face ups and downs in that process.

The resumption of work confronted us with greater tasks and new problems. The experience of the world proletariat had taught us that capitalism, when forced to make concessions or withdraw its attacks on the wages and hours of workers, tries to nullify them by devious ways, unless the leadership is vigilant and organisation strong. The agreement of 4 October contained three soft spots, wherein we were sure the millowners would try to drive in spikes to break the gains of the strike. One was the elasticity of the clause of restoring wages and conditions of March 1927, the second was that of the question of musters would not be raised.

The third was the payment of fixed rates of wages for the provisional period of October and November till full commenced on older rates, after the machinery and in proper order for work. The mill-  
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so if necessary. The question-form of the sentence at the top, which they have failed to notice, itself shows this. It was a question, as I have said to measure the extent of the resistance to the agreement in order to aid us in deciding our line of action. The response to this handbill as we expected was negligible. After one or two meetings it became clear that the Sassoon workers also were exhausted and the majority of them were unwilling and unable to continue the struggle at that moment just then. This was quite natural. They had been the first victims of rationalisation and had been fighting for over one year. Within four days the agreement had been accepted on all sides and accepted with thorough understanding. The greatest factor in bringing about this result was the fact that the workers found that here was a leadership that was not going to desert their struggle, though it might have to face ups and downs in that process.

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The third was the payment of fixed rates of wages for the provisional period of October and November till full work commenced on older rates, after the machinery and equipment had been set in proper order for work. The millowners' tactics of depriving the workers of the gains of the strike through these soft spots, two of which were in fact the essential demands at the root of the general strike, could not commence in October. Because the workers who had gone back to their villages did not return till the third week of October. But smaller complaints of victimisation

did begin to pour in and we had to set up an organisation to deal with them and therefrom arose the organisational work of the Girni Kamgar Union.

As has been stated, the GKU was founded on 22 May 1928 during the general strike, under circumstances which have been fully shown elsewhere. During the strike the union as such did not function, except in so far as it was a participant in the joint strike committee. All meetings, picketing, relief distribution etc. were done in the name of the strike committee, though the moderate group of Mr N. M. Joshi took care to mention, wherever it could, that the foreign remittance for relief were received by the Bombay Textile Labour Union and were contributed by that union to the strike committee. During the strike the GKU income from May to October was Rs 88.12.0. When the strike was over, though the strike committee, composed of three unions, continued to exist, the three unions began to separately build up their own organisations. The Bombay Textile Labour Union had a readymade apparatus, which, so far as its office work went, was well organised. That union had been working since 1926 and its first year of report showed 6,000 membership with Rs 17,000 as collection. The second annual report showed 4,000 members with Rs 12,000 as collections. (*AITUC Bulletin*, October 1928.) When it started competition with us it had Rs 13,000 to back it up, for centre offices in the mill area and a paid office staff. Our union had no centre offices except the head office whose rent also was in arrears. We had committed ourselves to pay Rs 2,000 for relief grain as our contribution, when the money for relief distribution in the last week of the strike fell short. So while our debts were over Rs 2,000 we had Rs 14 to our credit with our treasurer. But we had one thing which our rivals had not got. We had the immense strength of a revolutionary theory and a scientific faith in the creative capacity of the proletariat. On such foundation and Rs 14 we started to build up the GKU backed up by the additional credit of our work during a victorious strike. In our lectures during the strike, we had already from time to time emphasised the necessity of a

strong union embracing the majority of workers with an efficient staff and volunteer corps. Accordingly we issued on 12 October 1928 a handbill (P 967) explaining to the workers how and to whom they should pay subscriptions, the necessity for raising a substantial fund and a cadre of organisers to push up organisational work. This handbill also had been used by the millowners against us before the Fawcett committee and the same is now being brought in this case.

The prosecution has raised a tremendous structure over this handbill and the scheme of volunteers' and speakers' corps outlined therein. The committing magistrate says, "This provision of an army is an unusual feature of trade-union propaganda but from the point of view of the revolutionary it is an eminently sound proposal." The magistrate also quotes a handbill (P 929) issued by me on 12 December 1928.

The program outlined in these two handbills contains nothing very serious to warrant the remarks of the magistrate or the use of it made by the prosecution. The prosecution have raised a structure of a revolutionary conspiracy to overthrow the British empire. But to unearth a conspiracy extending over several years and not to find an "army to wage war" would make the government look disgraceful and discomfited. An army or at least plans of raising one is an absolute necessity in such a conspiracy extending over three continents and aimed at the overthrow of the mightiest empire on earth. Now for four years the secret police careered over the whole world for documents but they had to find some army in India ready to pounce on the king's sovereignty. Otherwise the drama would be without any romance. Having found the roots of the conspiracy at Moscow, the prosecution should not have been so very anxious to unearth a red army in India! They should have contented themselves with the Soviet Red Army and our appreciation of the heroism of that body. But the subtle legal brains refused to consider the conspiracy quite complete, until some red army drilling right down here under the very nose of imperialism and

shaking the beer bottles of the imperialist bureaucracy by its heavy march were found; and after a tremendous search of six hours of the offices of the Girni Kamgar Union they found these two handbills. Well, if you cannot find the red army, the next best is an army of red handbills. At least the whole red army had vanished, perhaps converted into "invisibles" and bottled up in the three mysterious bottles of tincture iodine for first aid, (another army apparatus!) found with Spratt. The handbills were seized and exhibited, for do they not actually contain the words "red army"?

Anybody who is not previously told that these handbills are issued by some terrible conspirators and are valuable evidence to show that these conspirators were raising a red army like the bolsheviks to overthrow the Europe will not take these leaflets for anything more than what they actually say, ie, they call for a volunteer crops and a staff of worker-speakers and organisers for the organisation of the union.

[SW 3, pp 167-73]

### *GKU Grows*

The Girni Kamgar Union really began to function from October, after the calling off of the strike. Since then the membership began to soar up continuously till January, in which month the collection of subscription and strike fund was the highest. But it cannot be said from the drop seen in the collection of February and March 1929 that we would not have been able to keep up the high membership which was well over 100,000 in January. The fall in membership in the next two months is not due to the turning away of the workers from the union as such. February was a month of communal rioting in Bombay, and the pay day of the workers, on which all the collection are made, fell in the middle of the riotous period, and thousands of workers who had not already left Bombay did so on receiving their pay straightway. In February for the same reason the mills did not work to full capacity and



therefore our collections in March also were low. Had it not been for the February calamity we would have got every man and woman of the remaining 40,000 in the GKU within the next three months. Every rupee of the ordinary subscription represents four members. We had also a strike fund of one rupee per head, payment of which was not compulsory for every member. The special collection of the strike fund was less than Rs 10,000 for all the six months together. Deducting this from the total of Rs 96,000 we get an average membership nearing 58,000 from October to March. The lowest being 28,000 in October 1928 and the highest over 100,000 in January 1929. (The registrar of trade unions in Bombay disbelieved my report when I informed him in December that our membership was near 80,000 and he persisted in announcing it as 54,000 only. Now at least from the above figures he should correct himself.) When we were removed from the field, the Bombay government in its note of 25 February 1930, while reviewing the past, observed, "The Girni Kamgar Union was the first union to undertake an intensive propaganda and to organise a large body of workers into trade union, with a regular organisation, collection of subscriptions and accumulation of funds. The other trade unions had only a limited membership although their organisation was on sound enough lines and they were controlled by well-known social workers." It was exactly for this reason that the GKU aroused the ire of the Bombay bourgeoisie and the government which wrote the above note. They did not want "a large body of workers into a trade union with a regular organisation". They wanted only such union as had "a limited membership controlled by well-known social workers"—well-known for their being amenable to bourgeois reasonableness, their intense efforts to avoid strikes and guard the interests of both the bourgeoisie and the workers, which ultimately means predominantly to guard the interests of the bourgeoisie. If the organisers of the GKU would not make way for these well-known social workers then imperialism, assisted by the Indian bourgeoisie, would step in and try to clear the way by

locking their opponents in the prisons. Unfortunately, it has not helped the well-known sound-enough social workers in any way.

[SW 3, pp 227-28]

## 25. BOMBAY MILL STRIKE

B. F. BRADLEY

Rationalisation and attempts at stabilisation are a feature fixed of presentday capitalism. In practically every country in the world capitalism is struggling to exist against its own contradictions, and to show how acute this position is becoming we have only to turn and look at a country like India. One would not think that in a country like this would so early show this form of capitalist decay.

India is a country that has only just started to become industrialised, a vast country with huge natural resources, abundance of cheap labour, market and resources at the door of the mill or factory, yet we hear the same cry from the capitalists of this country as we hear from the capitalists of the other countries, the cry of international competition, and so to try and keep afloat and safeguard their profits, they turn to the worker and demand retrenchment and wagecuts, resulting in further unemployment and poverty.

The mill strike in Bombay was brought about by this process, 150,000 mill workers have been existing until now on an average wage of less than Rs 20 per month, this in a town where cost of living and rent is extremely high. To sum the whole position, the general housing, working and living conditions of these workers is nothing short of damnable. But despite this fact the millowners of Bombay because, as they say, of competition from Japan etc., start a campaign to still worsen these conditions.

This campaign to reduce the cost of production by attacking the conditions of the worker took definite shape at

the latter end of 1927, and their fear of the workers revolting against these attacks, and to avoid a general strike, was shown by the method they adopted to introduce these conditions. This method was to select mill by mill and force the workers to accept. Between the beginning of 1928 and April of the same year isolated strikes took place in individual mills, to attempt to prevent the introduction of the new system and wagecuts, but the workers were forced back to work. The workers could see what was happening. Mill after mill was being attacked, and the workers were getting sick and tired of waiting to be attacked, waiting to be beaten. Propaganda was being carried on by the Workers and Peasants Party that the only effective method to stop this attack of the millowners was by the united stand of the workers, ie, a general strike, as against this some prominent trade-union leaders were carrying on propaganda. However, the workers could see no other way than by united action, and so they decided for a general strike.

Early in April this was decided and immediately it was known, the mill area of Bombay which has some 84 mills became an armed camp, "posse" (gangs) of police stood at all millgates prominently showing their weapons. Groups of armed police were stationed everywhere and lorry loads of them went through the streets of the mill area. Despite this show by the government, mill after mill was closed down by the strike, and on Monday, 16 April, the general strike took definite shape. Even at this stage Mr N. M. Joshi, secretary TUC, was against this strike.

On Monday 23, 100,000 workers were on strike and 42 mills closed down. At this stage a very serious incident happened: a large crowd of mill workers who had decided to strike and were returning to their chawls from Dadar were met by a group of armed police near a place called Kalachowki, about a mile away from any mill and on an open space which is a stone quarry. The police became aggressive and demanded that the workers should not proceed for some unknown reason. Then the police tried to disperse them and chase them in all directions. Then orders were given to open fire, with the net result that one

worker was killed, shot through the head, and another seriously wounded. After doing this piece of work, the police vanished leaving the dead and wounded lying there. The news spread and in a short time a huge crowd of over 10,000 workers collected. In the meantime the commissioner of police and the chief presidency magistrate arrived, and for the moment the position looked ugly because the workers wanted to carry the body in procession, and the commissioner of police had banned processions. However after some discussion it was allowed and the workers had won the point of being allowed to follow their dead comrade. It was a tragic sight, the body was placed on an improvised stretcher carried by four workers, and thousands of workers formed a huge procession.

The funeral procession was most imposing; workers marched with red flags in their hands and shouting, "Down with Capitalism", "Down with Imperialism", "Long Live the Workers" etc. to the jury house, where the inquest was held. After the inquest the workers formed a procession again and carried the dead body of their comrade to the cremation ground with shouts of "Long Live the Workers", etc.

The situation at this juncture was becoming extremely critical. I had been with the workers and the processions the whole time, but in other parts of the city the police had also been assaulting the workers. At Supari Bag there was a clash between the strikers and the police, about 15 strikers being injured and about 5 police. The situation was becoming more serious and the workers were becoming more exasperated by the fact that policemen were entering the workers' chawls day and night, and many cases of assault took place, so that the strikers passed their day in perpetual dread. Peaceful processions of workers were set upon by the police and all the police that were on duty in the mill area now carried lathis or long sticks. The police were ordered to attack every procession that took place, and they would belabour the workers right and left for nothing. Then an order was issued by the commissioner of police banning all processions.

Huge meetings of mill workers were organised by the Workers and Peasants Party at least once or twice a day at which thousands of workers would attend. Prominent at all these meetings were mounted and foot police commanded by armed and arrogant English inspectors and sergeants.

A strike committee was elected and means of raising money was considered. By 25 April every cotton mill in Bombay was closed down, a general strike had been effected. 150,000 mill workers were on strike. At this juncture it was necessary to bring about unity among the trade-union leaders for certain reasons; although there was considerable hostility shown to Mr N. M. Joshi it was decided that a joint strike committee should be set up. Nagu Sayaji Wadi became a famous place, for every morning thousands of strikers collected there, meetings were held and the progress of the strike reported. On 28 April the governor of Bombay met some deputations of supposed leaders of the strikers. The one led by a Mr Mayekar and the one led by Mr N. M. Joshi did not represent the workers and so no result was shown. The governor returned to Poona and the strikers were escorted back to their villages by the strike leaders.

On 1 May a joint strike committee was set up and real organisation of the strike taken in hand, picketing was started, volunteers were called for and posted as the mill-gates but the commissioner of police said he was not going to allow picketing and asked them to be withdrawn. The workers, however, were determined to carry on picketing. Hundreds of volunteers came forward prepared to go to prison if necessary. A meeting was held and it was decided to start regular picketing of all mills from that day.

The commissioner of police could see that the workers were determined and so he had to climb down and allow picketing.

At this juncture certain interesting rumours were spread about me: that I was an agent of Moscow, and again another and the more interesting, that I was an agent of Lancashire

sent out to ruin the mill industry of Bombay. The latter was of course a rumour spread by the nationalists.

The police were still carrying on a reign of terror and many cases of volunteers being arrested or beaten were reported: The strike committee met regularly and a full program of the workers' demands was drawn up including eight-hour day, minimum wage Rs 30, abolition of the system of fines etc.; as against this the Millowners Association published their scheme called standardisation which meant an increase of working hours, reduction in wages, where one worker was working one side spinning he would have to work two, where one worker was working two weaving frames he would have to work three and the total number of workers on the other jobs would be reduced. In short this scheme would mean the retrenchment of at least 15,000 workers. Now there existed an already growing army of unemployed and a feature of the Bombay mill industry was a system of badli (substitute). Badlis were standby men who would take the place of another worker who may be absent. This system of badli is to be discontinued under the standard scheme because of the knowledge that at the mill doors will wait a mass of workers ready to take the place of any who may be absent or replace any who they may like to sack. Although the owners protested that there was no reduction and no hardship for the workers their case would not hold water. It was simply a scheme to hide from the public the big wagecuts and the impossible position in which it places the worker.

More volunteers came forward for picketing and it was decided to enlist women picketers, so for the first time in Bombay the women took an active part in an industrial dispute. Women pickets were placed on the mills and vigorous picketing carried on.

Preparations were made to start giving relief to the strikers. Money was received from Russia and the Workers' Welfare League of India. Fourteen centres were opened throughout the mill area and on 15 June two seers of rice and dal was given to each striker. This relief was carried on until the end of the strike.

On 1 June the police framed up a charge against S. A. Dange who was arrested but owing to the mill hands whom the police had got hold of the frame the charge refusing to carry it through, the charge was dropped.

All the while the solidarity of the strikers was splendid. Huge meetings were being held every day and the consciousness of the workers was being awakened. The police tried to stop small processions of the workers crying slogans going out to collect relief but in this matter they failed. Many attempts were made by the millowners to break the solidarity of the workers with the aid of the police. Such an attempt was made on 6 August, the workers having been out for five months when the owners decided to open the mills in small groups. Elaborate plans were laid, a few mills here were to open today and a few mills there were open the next day with police protection. The chosen mills get up steam made ready to start and blew their whistles, but no employee turned up at the gate. So the police pickets were withdrawn and the owners failed.

One notable incident occurred early in the strike when two special CID shorthand reporters were sent to attend our meeting. They filled up many notebooks in reporting and one day they were driven away by the workers. They ran to the nearest telephone and within a short time several lorry loads of armed police and a party of mounted sawars appeared on the scene.

Many attempts to settle these strikes by conciliation boards failed, because the owners were called upon to drop the standardisation scheme which they refused to do.

It was becoming obvious that the workers though still determined were becoming exhausted because the strike had gone on for nearly six months and the funds of the strike committee were running short. On 4 October a meeting was called by the government of Bombay at which representatives of the millowners and strikers attended. Terms of agreement were arrived at, the owners should drop for the moment the standardisation scheme and everything should be submitted to a government committee, i.e., the workers' demands, standardisation etc. Thus ended

the longest and biggest strike that has ever taken place in India.

The workers consider it only a truce to give them time to prepare for when the owners again attempt to force this scheme on them. A very important point of the struggle is the wonderful consciousness that has awakened among them, and they realise now that they have always waited to be attacked by the employer. But now the workers are organising to alter this and fight for better conditions.

In closing I wish to pay tribute to the wonderful fighting spirit of the Indian textile worker in the splendid manner in which they held on to the struggle despite persecution and prosecution by the police, and despite lack of funds and organisation. The splendid show of solidarity deserves the praise of the workers throughout the world. Such spirit as shown by these workers means early emancipation from the bonds of capitalism and imperialism.

Meerut Record, P 1035

## 26. ON LILOOAH STRIKE

DHARANI KANTA GOSWAMI

In 1928 a strike wave passed over India from one end to the other and amongst them one of the important strikes was that of the EI Railway—the Lillooah workshop strike. The trouble originated there in the demand of the workers for an increase in their wages, recognition of their union and their demands which can be seen in D 390. The reply to these demands of the workers were given by the management in dismissing two of the workers from their services and after a day's stay in strike the workers were locked out on 8 March 1928. The lockout subsequently turned into a strike. More or less 14,000 workers were involved in this strike. On 25 March a clash of a very serious nature took place between the workers and the police. The work-



ers when returning in a procession from a meeting held at a place called Bamangachi were suddenly baton-charged by the police which naturally resulted in a clash which was next followed by the opening of fire by the military. As the result two workers were shot dead and 35 were wounded. This clash undoubtedly intensified the class character of the struggle and led to a sympathetic strike in various other adjoining workshops involving in all about 40,000 workers around Calcutta.

Attempts were made by the officials of the EIR Union in conjunction with other TU leaders, including Mr C. F. Andrews, to bring about a settlement but the workers' demands were rejected. The authorities turned a deaf ear to the workers' grievances.

In these circumstances the workers had no alternative but to ask their comrades of different workshops and departments on the line to come out in sympathy with them and thereby bring pressure on the authorities. To spread sympathetic strike on the line was the only legitimate weapon left to the workers under the circumstances. It was at that stage that I went to Ondal and Asansol being requested by the secretary of the union, Mr K. C. Mitra, and asked the workers of both the places to come out in sympathy with their much persecuted comrades of Lilooh workshop. Although our attempt to spread the strike on the line was rather too late yet I can say that it was not without success. During the strike period at Ondal and Asansol I did attend various meetings of the strikers: I spoke there and moved resolutions sympathising with the strikers of Lilooh. My every action then was supported by the strikers. The workers themselves took initiative and in thousands marched down to Sitarampur with a view to spread the strike gradually throughout the line. I do take all responsibility of my activities there—as I was all along supported by the workers there throughout my activities in those places I have a right to say that I was justified in doing so. A sympathetic strike at that stage was not only necessary but was the only legitimate weapon with the un-

armed toilers to be used by them in order to bring pressure upon the oppressing authorities. I do not like to go into detailed narration of the painful condition of the strikers at that time. Over and above their miserable pecuniary conditions during the strike period they met everywhere with police terrorism. What I have seen with my own eyes at Ondal and Asansol can hardly be described in words. At Ondal on a certain day in the afternoon while it was raining very heavily the workers' quarters wherefrom they were already evicted were broken open by the police and all there belongings, beds, clothes, utensils, everything were thrown out on the road. All this took place in the presence and under the instruction of the magistrate, the police superintendent and an inspector who were all sitting in a special saloon waiting on the railway line a few steps off from the place of occurrence. I do not like to describe any more. I have got my experience there and I know the workers as well have got a lesson there that the imperialist government not only does help the capitalists whenever necessary but it considers the latter's interests as its own and comes to its rescue with all its forces whenever danger threatens it. The strike however was unsuccessful. All resources being exhausted the workers were forced to go back to work unconditionally on 10 July, but that their spirit was unbroken can be judged from the incident of 30 July, when they again went on a temporary strike. I was not present when the first strike was called off by the union officials. I admit that the strike was a failure... so far as their immediate demands were concerned, but it was certainly a success, on the other hand, so far as their solidarity and class consciousness is concerned. I consider this success was a big achievement.

Extract from statement made in  
the Meerut Conspiracy Case

## 27. EIR DISPUTE

PHILIP SPRATT

The great lockout and strike on the EI Railway so tragically finished, is full of lessons for the labour movement. In spite of the risk of giving offence, it must be fully discussed for the benefit of the movement.

It must be admitted, in agreement with the *Statesman*, that the Lilooh strike was in the first place a technical mistake. In the absence of effective organisation on the line, a strike in a workshop alone must be in a very difficult position. Further retrenchment was in the air, and against it, united action alone is likely to be successful. Nevertheless, to accuse, as the *Statesman* does, the "outsiders" or "leaders", of this mistake, is unjustified. The strike was a spontaneous one, against oppression. Once begun, outsiders rightly held it their duty to assist.

But it must also be said that the most was not made of the opportunity. Though the strike was essentially in a weak position. Other factors were in its favour. In particular the fund originally in possession of the union at Lilooh was substantial, and could have been used to greater advantage. It was the proper tactic immediately to spread the strike so as to stop traffic. The extension of the strike to other works in Howrah, in so far as it was not probably an error. Or, if not, it should have been pursued with greater energy. The object was, by bringing out workers in Howrah and neighbourhood on sympathetic strikes, to force the authorities to intervene and bring the agent to terms. It was done however, in a halfhearted manner. Engineering shops struck, but the numerous local jute mills which were at that time almost at the boiling point of discontent, were not called out. All or none.

But in any case, this tactic is inferior to the proper one of extending the strike on the line. Either at the very beginning, or after the Bamangachi shooting incident, this should have been done with all available force. Especially the union secretary, who has far more influence

than any "outsider", should have done this. Actually he did not leave Lilloah until his original fund had gone, and even the second large contribution from the Russian unions was also practically exhausted and the strike consequently in an almost hopeless position.

Nevertheless, it was correct, even at that late stage, to attempt to spread the strike, and probably the big centre, —Asansol and the subsidiary workshop at Ondal, were the best places to begin at. It was, however, done even then with insufficient energy. The union secretary himself did not go until some weeks later, and only three propagandists were sent to the first place. The almost complete absence of organisation at the places in question, the depression still felt after the disastrous strikes of 1922, and the late stage of the strike at which propaganda was begun, all rendered the task extremely difficult. And success obtained, such as it was, shows what could have been done at an earlier and more opportune occasion, with more energy, and better finances.

The fact that the strikers at Asansol and Ondal have been penalised (up to the present) more than those at Lilloah, is a case of sheer vindictiveness on the part of the authorities, and could hardly have been foreseen. But in any case, it does not alter the fact that the attempt to spread the strike, even at that late stage, was justified and the union, if it had not done this, could not have claimed that it had done everything possible for its members. The decision to call off the strike at Lilloah, leaving the Ondal and Asansol men to their fate, has been much criticised. Actually, there was no alternative; the men could not hold out any longer. The only question was whether to go back unconditionally or to sign a useless and utterly humiliating agreement. The course actually taken, the former, seems better. Similarly the men at Asansol have been criticised for resuming work at once on hearing of their, and having some 400 of their comrades dismissed. Again nothing else could be expected of men who had little or no union organisation or experience, had been on strike for a month, and were being subjected daily to the

most rigorous police persecution. The mistake lay, not in these inevitable consequences of what had gone before, but in the inaction and delay which confined the sympathetic strikes to such narrow boundaries, and rendered all their sacrifice ultimately useless.

It is probable that this and other errors would have been avoided if more democratic methods had been adopted at the centre. A strong committee of strikers, with or without "outsiders", as necessary, should have been set up at the beginning, and allowed and even forced, to work. There is no place for autocracy in the labour movement—not even for benevolent autocracy. And moreover, it is highly urgent that the best workers should be trained at the work of trade-unionism in all its departments. Men who can strike for four months are not children.

Minor but important points of criticism can be made against the attitude of personal devotion which was encouraged, or at any rate tolerated, throughout the strike. This kind of policy is out of place, as it replaces devotion to the masses, and to the principles of the labour movement, by a mere bourgeois personal ideal, and also in this case tends to encourage false and reactionary ideas of a pseudo-religious type. The exploitation of the religious sentiments of the masses by unscrupulous demagogues, is a very serious obstacle to our political progress, and must be avoided by all sincere labour men.

Another question is that of the so-called "satyagraha" performed outside the police court at Howrah when the case against those guilty of the Bamangachi shooting was dismissed. A mass protest was certainly called for and justified but the form it took was objectionable. On the one hand "satyagraha" is foreign to the labour movement. It is the tactics of middle-class impotence, and is coloured by all kinds of false religious and moral ideas. And on the other hand the steps actually taken were such as to give the police the chance they were waiting for, to strike a little terror into the workers' hearts. About twenty arrests were made, and many men, including indispensable union workers, were severely injured.

It is impossible in the absence of detailed acquaintance with the situation, to criticise the internal administration of all the strike, though it appears to an outside observer that the money at the disposal of the union was spent rather recklessly. In any case this is a minor point. The main question is that the strategy of the struggle as a whole was mismanaged. One of the great lessons of Kharagpur—that the workshop strike can only succeed when supported by the line; it is useful as a strong rallying centre it cannot strike almost completely unorganised and this alone make success difficult. But nothing was done to remedy it until nearly all enthusiasm had died away, public support had disappeared, funds were exhausted, and the chances of the strike generally reduced almost to zero. It is not the concern of the writer to lay the blame for this at the door of any individual nor to argue whether it would in fact have been practical to act in any other way. The question is, that these are the lessons which have to be borne in mind for the future.

It is interesting to notice that this strike provides an instructive refutation of an old error which is current in the labour movement—the syndicalist notions in regard to the “active minority”. In this case, responsible officials of the union actually went so far as to suggest that the Liloah workers alone could secure gains for the whole line. It is true that under capitalism only a minority of workers will generally take a very active part in the movement. But they cannot act effectively without, not merely the passive support, but the organised support of the majority. In the EI Railway—and the case could be paralleled on almost any Indian railway — there is a strong “active minority” concentrated in the workshops. But it can do nothing alone. This, and the very similar theory of the “spontaneous” reaction of the masses to a proper stimulus (both theories are merely excuses to escape from the hard drudgery of organisation) were decisively disproved by this strike.

Before leaving the subject it is worth while to mention one or two other interesting points. There can be little

doubt that the severity of the attitude of the railway authorities and the government was to some extent due to the active part taken in the strike by the Workers and Peasants Party (the "communists" as the Anglo-Indian press calls us). In order to discredit us they have told many lies about us, and at the same time made special efforts to crush the strike. It is interesting to notice, at this point, how the reactionary labour leaders, Mr K. S. Roy Chowdhury, Mr C. F. Andrews, Mr B. Shiva Rao, Mrs Besant, Mr E. Kirk, played up to the propaganda of the *Statesman* & Co., and indulged in stupid abuse of "Moscow gold". The lesson is obviously just the contrary of that which they want the workers to draw. If they are so anxious to discredit us, that in itself is strong evidence that our policy is correct. Incidentally it may be pointed out that it was the Workers and Peasants Party members who throughout pressed for the policy of extension of the strike on the line, and took a prominent part in carrying it out.

Finally, a point which should not be missed, is the new method being adopted by the police to crush this strike. While using rifles sparingly—they attract so much attention—they seem to have given the police and other hired toughs free rein to beat and assault and arrest as they will. The police-terror at Asansol was probably worse than anything that had been seen in industrial disputes for some time. It recalls the days of Russian garrison. It is a sign of the growing importance of the labour movement, and the increasing menace to the existing order which it represents. The only remedy for the time being is that which the WPP annual conference pointed out—the organised solidarity of the workers, workers' defence corps, for selfdiscipline, and for the purpose of overawing opponents.

The results of the Lילוah strike seem for the moment to be terrible. Many hundreds of men are victimised, thousands have been for months without proper food, heads and bones have been broken by the dozen. Yet it is sentimentality to regret this. Everything possible must be done

for the sufferers, but above all the union must be kept strong and they must not be allowed to despair. Lenin once said that the workers' revolution, in contrast to bourgeois revolution, goes from defeat to defeat, until it is finally successful. They are golden words.

Meerut Record, P 415 (15)

## 28. JUTE MILL STRIKE

The police opened fire on the jute mill workers of Bauria. After that arrests of workers and cases against them have started. Just a few days before the Bauria incident strikes in Ludlow Jute Mill, Chengail, and Wellington Jute Mill, Rishra, have twice taken place. No other factories and workshops in India make such an enormous profit as the jute mills. The shareholders of the jute mills made a profit of Rs 600 per year on every Rs 100 investment. The more the profit the more the exploitation of the workers. That means, the owners can make such a big profit by depriving the workers of their legitimate due of their labour. The shareholders of the company realise the amount of their investments in one or two years. They do not have to do any work. So, wherefrom this huge profit they make come? The workers of jute mills have started pondering over this. They are realising from the experience of their hunger who are looting the fruits of their labour. The incidents of Chengail, Bauria and Rishra are the signs of consciousness of the workers. This consciousness of the Bauria workers has been answered by bullets. Whenever the millowners and their accomplices, the police, think it necessary, they take resort to such actions. For this reason the workers have to be prepared from right now. The workers will not get anything by resorting to strike in one or two factories. The repression on them goes on in all the mills. Their



blood is sucked by all the millowners. So all the workers of all the jute mills are to unite and fight together against the owners everywhere, otherwise they will never be able to win their battle. There are 3,40,000 workers in the jute mills of Bengal. When these 3,40,000 workers will rise as organised one and will fight against the owners unitedly only then they will be able to gain something from the owners. Isolated strikes here and there will not yield any substantial result. Only when they will be able to stop all the jute mills by rising unitedly will they be greeted with shouts of triumph from all sides. The jute workers will have to prepare themselves for that auspicious day. They will have to muster all their strength together. If they resort to have separate unions and try to fight separately, the owners will destroy them with the help of the police. They will have to be organised in such a way that even if one worker is victimised by the owners all the 3 lakh 40 thousand workers will fight as one to remedy the wrong. They will also have to resort to strike together. But that will not be possible until all the jute mill workers form one union. Of course, this union will have its branches in different areas.

*Ganavani*, 'Vivida Prasanga', No 7. 26 July 1928

## 29. CONDITIONS OF WORKERS IN THE JUTE INDUSTRY OF BENGAL

The jute workers are the most exploited section of workers in Bengal. They are exploited, tyrannised and oppressed inhumanly by their employers who make enormous profit year after year by their exploitation of these wretched victims of capitalism. Jute workers are the most important section of the working class which yet remain to be organised on a very firm footing and definitely on class basis. They are important from the point of view of their exploitation by their employers and the

huge and fabulously enormous wealth they produce for their employers. Even from the early period when this most profitable industry was introduced in Bengal the jute mills were absolutely maintained by British capital and their managements were also absolutely in the hands of the British capitalists. But now the position is almost reversed. Larger number of the shares of jute industry are now held by the Indian capitalists.

According to the report of Sime and Johnston, representatives of the Dundee Jute and Flax Workers' Union, 60 per cent of the shares are now held by Indians (D 65). But the effective management is still in the hands of the British capitalists such as Andrew Yule and Co. which alone made a profit to the extent of 65 lakhs of rupees in 1924 (D 65). These British and Indian capitalists combined together appropriate the huge profit that comes out of this industry and is produced by the sweat of 3,76,000 poor and starving jute workers. Sime and Johnston stated in their report that in 1915, 1920 and 1924 these jute mill companies of Bengal have made profit of 60, 40 and 25 crores of rupees respectively. According to the same report during the period of 1916 to 1924, a few of these jute mill companies had distributed dividends which amount to as high as 300 to 400 per cent. Further we get from the same report which mentions that a profit of £300 millions taken from 3,00,000 workers in 10 years means £1000 per head. That means £100 a year from each worker.

And what does the worker get who produces £100 per year, toiling and sweating and starving from early morning till late at night under the roof of the greedy monster, Rs 2/4 to 5/4 at the most per head per week. Is it not an example of most naked and shameless exploitation of the working class by the capitalists and does it not give one an idea of the most barefaced robbery by the capitalists of the workers who are the producers of the wealth of the earth? The story of the jute workers is one of misery and slavery of the worst type. The wages mentioned above are paid for 54 hours actual work but as a matter of fact the mill works daily from 5-30 a.m. to 7 p.m. That means

13½ hours full work. Moreover there is the oppression of *kabulis*, *salami* and *fines*.

Their housing conditions are of the worst type: a mud and brick room of 10 ft x 8 ft is considered as their house—where they live, father, mother and children all huddled together sometimes 9 to 10; their goats and other cattle are also kept in the same room as they cannot afford to hire a separate room for such purpose.

Although the Indian factories act of 1922 prohibits employment of child labour under 12 years, this practice is still going on in jute mills. Little children are often found sleeping in the yard of the mill premises amidst the creaking noise of machinery; their mothers cannot leave them at home as there are none to look after them when they come to their work.

There is no adequate provision for medical relief and no educational facilities for the workers around these jute mills which are making such an unimaginable enormous profit and fortune for the capitalists. This industry which has made and is making fabulous fortune and has built along the banks of the Hoogly palatial bungalows with all up-to-date equipment of luxury for the jute magnates and managers is built out of the blood and sweat of the starving workers, who live in the mud huts, dirty and insanitary bustees, in extreme need and perpetual poverty. These conditions that have been stated here will perfectly justify my association with the Jute Workers' Union and my assistance in that organisation and struggle of the jute workers whose blood and vitality have been sucked by the jute millowners.

Meerut Record,

Extract from statement of D. K. Goswami,

PP 61-63

### 30. CHENGAIL JUTE WORKERS' STRIKE

In order to explain my attitude I need go a little into the history of the origin of the union as well as of the

strike. In early March there was a strike in the Ludlow Jute Mill, Chengail. It collapsed after three or four days. About 250 workers were discharged, most of them did not leave the place. They stayed on and invited the Bengal Trade Union Federation to help them to form a union. The BTUF accepted their invitation and under its auspices a union was formed towards the end of March with the discharged workers as first members: those men joined the union in the hope that through its influence they would be able to get back their job before long (see P 2228, first paragraph, which is a correct account except that the figure of discharged workers given there is according to my information an underestimate). Gradually the workers at the bench also began to join the union in batches. This roused the anger of the mill management. From the very beginning they took up a hostile attitude towards the union, both its officials and members.

Exactly a month elapsed between the inception of the union and the April strike. In the course of this month no less than 100 workers were discharged for being members of the union. As soon as a worker would be discharged he would be asked to at once vacate the company's quarters which by the way were not supplied free to the workers but let out on rent. If he refused or delayed his room would be broken open and belongings thrown out. There were many instances when discharged workers were not allowed to finish their cooking or partake of their half-cooked meal. This was the attitude towards the union officials was no less hostile.

All the adjoining grounds being owned by the mill company there was no office room available for the union nearby. Although an office was at last secured it was about 1½ miles from the mill. Enlistment of members of the union was not possible there, especially on week days. So the secretary of the union made several attempts to enlist members in the workers' quarters, on the express invitation of the workers, but each time he was prevented by jamadars acting under orders of the management from entering the lines.

Further during the one month between the formation of the union and the next strike the secretary wrote several letters one after the other to the manager of the mill drawing his attention to the frequent dismissals and persecution of the workers on account to union activity, to the many abuses prevailing in the company's line and to other grievances of the workers which were causing unrest among them and also requesting him each time to take back the dismissed men including those victimised during the March strike. None of those letters was answered. Some were not even received.

At last feeling himself helpless the secretary of the union appealed to the secretary of the BTUF, the higher TU body, to move in the matter. Accordingly the secretary of the federation wrote a letter to the manager drawing his attention to the numerous complaints of the workers and protesting mildly against his attitude of indifference towards those complaints and of hostility towards the union. This letter was delivered to the manager by a spinning sardar named Mahadeo, on the morning of 23 April. The very name of BTUF appearing in print on the cover of the letter made the manager so angry that instead of opening it and reading its contents he tore it to pieces and trampled them underfoot in the presence of the bearer whom he also dismissed on the spot.

The news of the insult to the 'big union' (BTUF) and of the victimisation of Mahadeo, an active member of the union, spread among the workers and the workers followed on the same afternoon, 23 April. For the causes of the strike see PW 98 who corroborates my statement.

On the following day the water supply to the workers' lines was suddenly cut off from noon till evening. As the workers were not prepared for it they had not stored water beforehand. It was hot and meal-time and there was no fresh water tank near by. This is class war in practice and not in theory. What wonder that the workers would cherish bitter feelings against their employers and regard them as their enemies.

Soon after the above occurrence took place the meeting reported by PW 27. The SDO came from the manager's office and told us that the manager was willing to receive a deputation of workers but was on no account prepared to negotiate with the union officials or recognise the union. That meant that the victimised men, both those who were the original members of the union and those who were subsequently dismissed on account of their union membership, were to stay where they were. They would have no change of reinstatement. That meant a split in the ranks of the workers between the unionists and non-unionists and that the victimisation of the unionists would go on as before. I at any rate could not assent to such a proposition which I regarded as a betrayal of the interests of the workers. What is there a union for if it does not fight for its recognition and surrenders its right to existence to the will of the employer?

This was the major consideration; there were others no less important. Everywhere the employers insist on negotiating with their own men and not with outsiders, that is, union officials. It is not out of any special love for their own men. They know that their own men being subordinates and mostly illiterate are no match for them, and that it is not difficult to bully them by threats or bluff them by empty promises, whereas in the outsiders they meet their equals and they know that it is not so easy to dupe or defeat them. If in spite of their unequal position some of the workers display unusual courage or skill in discussion with their masters they are marked out as undesirable and sacked at the earliest opportunity. Sometimes the mere fact of being elected representatives is sufficient to jeopardise the position of those who are so elected, as they are suspected by the authorities to be the ringleaders. Moreover in the case of a settlement with the union officials the employers have to affix their signatures to the terms of settlement whereas if it is an agreement with their employees the terms of agreement need not be reduced to writing and signed. Verbal promises

suffice and it is always easier to break them with impunity than to repudiate a signed document.

Visualising all these consequences of a deputation of workers not assisted by union officials. I suggested an alternative to the SDO. It was that the deputation should go to the management, place before them the strikers' demands, should not enter into any discussion with them and should bring back the management's terms to the meeting which would have the final authority to accept or reject them, or to suggest any modification. In other words I suggested that the deputation should act only as a channel of communication between the workers and the management and not have the power to conclude an agreement on the spot without reference to the rest of the workers. I think this suggestion had a double merit. On the one hand it would not have exposed the members of the deputation to the displeasure of the management, on the other it would have avoided a split in the ranks of the strikers. This suggestion for obvious reasons was not accepted by the SDO. I may add that the workers fully agreed with my viewpoint whose correctness was established by the subsequent developments and results of the strike. The management had to yield, they had to negotiate with the union officials and sign an agreement with them. Some of the victimised union members were at once taken back, the rest were to be reinstated within a stipulated period. Some of the other grievances were also redressed. Though formal recognition was still withheld from the union, virtual recognition was granted and that is what I aimed at, because that made it possible for us to settle future disputes as far as possible through negotiation and not through strikes.

**31. THE CONCLUSION OF CHENGAIL JUTE STRIKE**

On 10 May the strike was settled. I was at Chengail that afternoon and was talking with Spratt and the secretary as also some members of the executive committee at the union office before going to a meeting fixed to be held in an open field adjoining when the SDO came and called me aside. He asked me to use my influence for the settlement and said that the manager would like to talk to me but that he would not see the others. I replied I was always ready to do all that I could for a reasonable settlement but I could not see the manager without the secretary and Spratt who was deputed by me on behalf of the federation. The SDO went away and about half an hour after he came back and invited us to follow him. We asked the workers to wait till our return from a visit to the manager. After three hours' discussion between the manager and myself in the presence of the SDO, with the secretary and Spratt helping me on questions of fact arising out of discussion, the terms were agreed to and we parted with the promise that the manager would be informed early next morning of the decision of the meeting to be held that very night as it was already very late. The meeting agreed to the terms after a great deal of discussion and resumption took place next morning after some slight hitches had been adjusted by the secretary. I left Chengail for Calcutta by the first train available in the morning. The terms of settlement are to be found in D 174(3) and D 174(1).

**SETTLEMENT OF CHENGAIL STRIKE  
WORKERS GAIN SUBSTANTIAL CONCESSIONS**

Kishorilal Ghosh, secretary, Bengal Trade Union Federation, writes:

On the invitation of Mr Washington, manager, Ludlow Jute Mill at Chengail Mr Spratt, S. J. Bankimchandra Mukherjee, secretary of the Chengail Jute Workers' Union, and myself saw him at his office the day before yesterday



and after about three hours' discussion with him a settlement was arrived at on the basis of the following terms:

1. Withdrawal of cases.
2. No victimisation.
3. Reinstatement of those who had not been taken on before this strike must wait their turn.
4. Mahadeb whose dismissal was the occasion of the strike may be taken back in a month or as soon as normal conditions prevail.
5. All cases of bribery will be dealt with promptly.
6. Two head jamadars whose arrogance and extortion were mainly responsible for the strike to go this morning.
7. Inquiry as to average earnings in different departments in neighbouring mills, if it is found that they are lower than those in any of the said mills adjustments will be made so as to equalise the items (not including "khoraki")—It must be understood that there are different occupations in each department, and that comparisons will be made of the respective operations.
8. Stoppage of corporal punishment.
9. All old hands returning within a fortnight from date to be given their old jobs.
10. No obstacles to be placed in the way of union organisation—except that the right of non-employees to enter company property against the express orders of the owners is not acknowledged.
11. No compulsion to accommodate more than one family or poor persons in one room in the lines. This has always been the company's intention.

The strike was called off yesterday and it is to be hoped that the manager would scrupulously abide by the terms he agreed to and that no cause would be given for future trouble.

### 32. BAURIA JUTE MILL STRIKE

In order to explain my position with regard to Bauria strike, which originally was a lockout, it is necessary for me to state in brief how the lockout took place. The mill authorities had been contemplating for some time past to introduce the single shift system of work in place of the double or multiple shift system under which the Bauria jute mills had been working since their foundation. This was a scheme of rationalisation adopted by many of the jute mills after the expiry of the period of war boom in order to lower the costs of production by reducing the number of workers roughly by 1/3, and increasing the weekly working hours of each worker from 38 to 54 or 60, without allowing him corresponding increase of wages.

Under this scheme the employers stand to gain everything but the workers lose heavily. Naturally they look upon it with disfavour and have desperately resisted wherever an attempt has been made to introduce it. In 1926 the system was simultaneously introduced in a large number of mills in one area, resulting in a strike involving 40 to 50 thousand workers and lasting for several weeks.

The Fort Gloucester authorities who were wiser by this experience did not want to introduce the change in normal conditions, for in that case they feared the resistance of workers would be prolonged and vigorous. So they were seeking an opportunity and no opportunity could be better than a temporary disturbance during which they could carry out wholesale dismissals of workers on the plea of their having disturbed the peace, practise intimidation to break their morale, and introduce the change as a retributive measure without fear of much opposition.

With this end in view they took to provoking the workers into acts of disorder. It is the usual practice in jute mills to stop the running of machinery half an hour before the closing time, that is, at 6.30 p.m., on the last working day of the week for the purpose of getting the machines cleaned. This time-honoured practice was sud-

denly changed and orders were issued to the workers to clean running machines between 4-30 and 5 p.m. The workers refused. The management insisted and in course of an altercation they assaulted some workers and those retaliated.

This is the violence I referred to in my speech of 15 July, reported by PW 98, on which date I attended a meeting in Bauria for the first time. There were other provocations of a more or less serious nature which need not be detailed here nor need I enter into the many flagrant abuses which are a usual feature in all jute mills, and in fact all mills—such as fines of different varieties, forfeiture and withholding of wages, bribery, time cribbing, low rates of wages, etc.

One peculiar feature of the Bauria mills was that the workers were not allowed to go to their homes or to the bazaar to take meals or refreshments during periods of recess provided by law. They would be kept confined within the mill premises throughout the day from starting to closing time.

On the top of this came an interference of an unusual character. There was a mohammedan graveyard, a communal property, on which moharram and other mohammedan festivals used to be celebrated and communal meetings held from time to time. The authorities suddenly declared this grounds as company's property and prohibited all meetings and even celebration of moharram. Disregarding the prohibition the local mohammedans, both workers and peasants, assembled in thousands on the moharram day fully determined for a trial of strength with the authorities. Their overwhelming number and menacing attitude frightened the authorities who did not dare to interfere.

This was the only piece of ground in Bauria which remained in possession of the workers to the end, and was used for meetings during the strike. Every inch of ground besides this in and about Bauria belonged to the company which owned not only the mills but also about 20 villages

in the neighbourhood, so that mill workers were at the same time the company's tenants. This is a unique feature of that company.

No driving and cycling except for the European and superior Indian staff of the mills was allowed on the company's roads, even on the district board road which ran through the mill area. At certain periods of the year, usually twice, nobody was allowed to use any of these roads without formal permit.

This was the position that I found on 15 July 1928. Two days before this date one of the three mills had been closed by the authorities without any notice or statement of reasons. Some of the workers had been contemplating to go on strike in sympathy with their locked out comrades. This was brought to our notice by a few workers at the meeting. We saw the inopportuneness of the step at the time because we thought that it would be easier for the newly started union to feed the locked out workers of one mill than to help all of them if all went on strike. That is why both Comrade Ghosh and I asked the workers repeatedly not to go on strike.

It should also be mentioned that the Bauria Jute Workers' Union was formed at this very meeting of 15 July and not earlier. The union was formed under the auspices of the BTUF (Bengal Trade Union Federation).

On 16 July, two mills started work, the third remaining closed. The manager of one of the two working mills dismissed five workers in the morning: some of the other workers pressed him for reinstatement of the dismissed men but he would not agree. In the middle of the discussion the workers were suddenly attacked by the mill jamadars and boatmen, about 200 strong. The cries of the attacked men brought other workers to their help and a melee ensued in the course of which police opened fire and wounded 23 workers. All the mills were at once closed down and remained so for a fortnight.

As is usual in such cases and as was desired by the mill authorities wholesale arrests and intimidation followed and continued for one week. After a week as things were

gradually settling down and as the workers were eagerly expecting to see the mills open and hoping to go back to work, a notice appeared on 25 July 1928 announcing the authorities' decision to introduce the single shift system of work from the date of reopening. The mills remained closed for five days even after this notice and only one mill out of three was reopened on 1 August. This mill remained open for two weeks only and was shut down on 14 August. After this date (P 118) all the three mills remained closed continuously for more than 2½ months, reopening one on 1 November and the remaining two on 7 November, so that except for an interval of only two weeks all three mills were continuously closed for full 3½ months from 16 July.

It is significant that the Bengal Jute Mills Association's annual report which appeared about the time of the July disturbance mentioned Bauria as having introduced single shift on and from 16 July, the very day of the disturbance. As for the workers the notice of 26 July greatly depressed them. None the less they stood up against the change. At this point they were forced to refuse to work. From what has been stated so far it will be seen that the workers had not gone on strike before the introduction of the new system. Though they had many serious grievances they had made no demands nor had they walked out of the mills voluntarily. It was after the announcement of the change of system that the strike began.

Meerut Record,

Extract from Radharaman Mitra's statement

### 33. SI RAILWAY STRIKE

Hardly the BN Railway struggle ended on 6 December 1927 when clouds began to gather on the SI Railway. As a matter of fact, simultaneously with the BNR agent's attack on his workers in September 1927, his brother agent.

of the South Indian Railway announced on 9 September 1927 of the prospective reductions of staffs on his railway, as per recommendations of the Raven committee. By this time the BN Railway strike had started, and the first thing, and I think the most correct one, that the SIR workers did, was to show solidarity with the BN Railway workers. They deputed Comrade Singaravelu Chettiar to visit Kharagpur. They took the initiative in conjunction with the M&SM railwaymen to call a special convention with the All India Railwaymen's Federation to form concrete plans for supporting the BN Railway strikers as well as to forge a united front of all railwaymen in India to meet the attacks of the railway board. I have dealt with these details about the AIRF in connection with the BNR strike. Comrade Singaravelu Chettiar did some excellent work on behalf of the BNR workers and helped them to carry on propaganda on the BNR line. But what is more important is his work on the SIR line.

Following the lead given by the All India Railway Federation at the special convention on 30 October 1927, Comrades Singaravelu Chettiar and Mukundlal started agitation on the SIR line. The SIR men themselves were anxious for the work and during the two months, November and December 1927, considerable organisation work was done throughout the line...

From December 1927 to April 1928 the central labour board of SIR Labour Union was only busy in carrying on propaganda on the line with the help of district labour unions. Towards the end of January the SIR workers held a conference at Nagapattam at which resolutions were passed condemning the proposed scheme of retrenchment as unnecessary and unjust. They also decided to prepare for direct action if the railway authorities insisted in putting the proposals into practice and operation.

Towards the end of March the railway inquiry committee completed its work and the full plan of retrenchment was ready. On 17 April the agent of the SIR issued a circular regarding the Golden Rock Workshops retrenchment scheme. He declared that 3171 men were to be retrenched

and he called for voluntary resignations, offering 1/12 month's pay for every one month of service by way of bonus to those who would come forth to resign. However this notice did not produce the required effect and no man came forth to resign. On the contrary the SIR Labour Union carried on active propaganda for direct action.

Numerous meetings were held to prepare the workers for action as well as the general public was approached and kept informed about the righteousness of the cause of the workers. The effect of this agitation seemed to be that the general public became sympathetic towards the railwaymen and therefore the agent on 18 June issued another notice in which he made special appeal to the general public. He regretted that men had not taken advantage of his offer for voluntary resignations and, therefore, now he offered them double the amount of gratuity which a man was entitled to under ordinary circumstances. And then he further informed the men that in case this offer was not accepted the administration would make its own selections for reduction as well as for transfer to Colden Rock Workshops. He put forth the trade tests for those who were to be retained in service and if they passed the trade tests they were further to be submitted again for medical examination. And those who did not agree to undergo these tests would not be selected for retention in the service and would actually be dismissed when the time came for their particular shops to be closed down...

In spite of all these threats and preparations for war on the part of the railway administration and the government, the workers were not cowed down. They were pressing for direct action. The workshopmen had by now secured the assistance of the line by incorporating the grievances of the linemen along with their own grievances against retrenchment. As I have said earlier the conditions of the SIRmen in general were very bad and therefore very soon the agitation for direct action for the betterment of those wretched conditions received immense support from the linemen. Alarmed by this solidarity between the workshopmen and the linemen the agent tried

to drive a wedge between the two. His intention was to isolate the workshopmen and the linemen and fight them separately.

On 27 June he therefore came out with an open letter addressed to the SIR men in which he offered to further liberalise the bonus terms and promised inquiry into the grievances of the menial and the other low-paid staff of the line. But the workers were not deceived by this dodge. They knew that these vague promises were only meant to divide their ranks and nothing more. On 28 June the workshop workers at Podanur, Nagapattam and Golden Rock refused definitely to submit to the trade tests and from 29 they resorted to passive resistance or satyagraha by refusing to work unless the trade tests were abolished.

As a consequence, the agent of the SIR declared a lock-out in these workshops from 29 June. The news of the lockout spread on the line very speedily. The signallers, the guards and the running staff carried the message from one end to the other. In 30 the Engineering Workshop at Trichinopoly took out a huge procession through the city and held a mass meeting under the presidentship of Mukundalal Sarcar. The meeting unanimously declared that unless the retrenchment orders were withdrawn and the trade tests were abolished there would be a general strike on the whole line on and from 14 July 1928.

An ultimatum was accordingly sent to the agent. The central committee of the SIR Labour Union met in Trichinopoly and appointed a strike committee consisting of Comrades Singaravelu, Mukundalal Sarcar and other prominent workers with Mr Narayanaswami as its secretary. The central committee of the SIR Labour Board voted Rs 10,000 as the first instalment for the propaganda work of the strike committee. The strike committee draw up a plan of organisation for setting up a powerful centralised machinery for the conduct of the strike, with disciplined and well-organised local committees at every important centre throughout the line. A hurricane campaign was undertaken to push on the work of the preparation of



general strike. The most active workers were selected to form local strike committees.

### *Attempt at United Front of All India Railwaymen*

Having made so much preparations on the whole line the workers directed their attention to the other railway lines in India. After the experiences of BNR and EIR strikes, the SIR men realised the danger of an isolated fight with railway authorities. It was found by experience that in the event of a dispute on one railway the government rallied its forces and secured reinforcement in the form of blacklegs from other railways. The SIRmen therefore decided to counteract this move of the authorities. They saw that the isolated fights were more often than not unsuccessful. They therefore decided to build a united front of all-India railwaymen and give a final battle on this issue of retrenchment which has become a common danger to all-India railwaymen.

The strike committee of the SIRmen therefore deputed Comrades Singaravelu and Sarcar to meet the representatives of other railways and devise means for common action.

Accordingly Comrades Singaravelu and Sarcar came down to Bombay in the first week of July 1928 to meet the GIP and BB&CI Railway Unions' representatives. A meeting of the representatives from the GIP Railway Employees' Union, GIP Railway Workmen's Union and BB&CI Railway Employees' Union was arranged in the Watson's Annex where Mr Jhabwala had some sort of an office. I was present at the meeting along with others on behalf of the GIPmen while Mr Jhabwala and Mr Marcel Fernandes represented the BB&CI Railway Union. After full consideration of the situation it was agreed unanimously at this meeting that any action to be taken should not be isolated action but that it should be a common action by all-India railwaymen. It was therefore decided that a special meeting of the general council of the All-India Railwaymen's Federation be requisitioned and on

behalf of the GIPmen we took the lead in wiring to Mr Giri, the general secretary of the Federation, to summon a meeting of the federation on or about 15 July 1928.

In the Bombay meeting it was further decided that Comrades Singaravelu and Sarcar should return to Madras via Kharagpur and Calcutta and meet the BNRmen and the EIRmen respectively and impress upon them the necessity of a concerted action. It was also resolved that Comrades Singaravelu and Sarcar should prevail upon the SIRmen to postpone action decided upon by the SIR strike committee for 20 July, until the All India Railwaymen's Federation's general council met.

Accordingly a detailed joint telegram was sent from Bombay on behalf of the BB&CI and GIP Railwaymen's Unions, and which was also signed by Comrades Singaravelu and Sarcar, requesting the SIR strike committee to postpone taking action on 20 and Comrades Singaravelu and Sarcar left on 7 July for Calcutta. On way to Calcutta they halted at Nagpur and Kharagpur and had good response at both the places. The BNRmen readily supported the common action proposal but at Calcutta the EIRmen who, thanks to Mr K. C. Mitra's bungling, had suffered a terrible defeat and only gone back on 10 July, were unwilling for immediate action. Mr K. C. Mitra was, of course, completely opposed to this proposal and did not even favour the idea of the meeting of the general council of the federation. Comrades Singaravelu and Sarcar met Mr Giri on the way and prevailed upon him to call the meeting of the general council and by urgent notices by wire and meeting was decided upon to be held on 18 July at Trichinopoly.

While things were shaping like this the government played one of the most wicked tactics. When Comrades Singaravelu and Sarcar reached back Madras after their tour, they found that all the telegrams and other communications sent by us from Bombay were held up and none had reached the strike committee of the SIR Labour Union. The SIRmen therefore ignorant of these developments, had proceeded with their original plan of work and

almost everything was ready for the strike on 20 July. The government had by withholding our telegrams precipitated a strike on the SIR. It was their definite tactic not to allow time for the general council of the federation to meet and develop the plan of concerted action. Not only government withheld our telegrams to the SIR Union but they also intercepted several telegrams sent by Comrades Singaravelu and Sarcar from Nagpur, Kharagpur, Calcutta and Madras. Similarly the telegraphic notices of special meeting of the general council at Trichinopoly called on 18 did not reach the respective railway unions and the meeting had to be postponed to 5 August 1928. Cut off from all other railway unions the SIRmen proceeded with their work according to the plan of their strike committee. On 5 July the president of the central committee of the SIR Labour Union issued notices of warning to the general public asking them to postpone their journey and stop booking of goods, in view of the impending general strike.

While the union central committee as well as the strike committee were doing their best to consolidate all the workingclass forces, Messrs Shiva Rao and Kirk were busy with their disruptive and strike-breaking activity. They had some influence amongst a section of workers in Madras and Nagapattam and they used this to disrupt the work of the strike committee. It would be remembered that a lockout was declared in the workshops at Nagapatnam, Golden Rock and Podanur on 29 June. Messrs Shiva Rao and Kirk intrigued with the agent and persuaded him to reopen shops on the promise that they would ask men under their influence to resume work. The agent accordingly put up a notice on 2 July that the shops at Podanur, Nagapattam and Trichinopoly would be reopened as soon as it was definitely assured that the men at any individual centre were prepared and undertake not to offer satyagraha...

On 15 July, Mr D. Krishnaswami Pillai, the president of the central committee of SIR Labour Union, sent an ultimatum to the agent in reply to the abovementioned inso-

lent circular that unless the demands of the men were conceded there would be a general strike on the railways from 20 July. The central committee of the union also issued notices to the men that since every effort for redressing their grievances had failed, so they should down tools from the midnight of 19 July 1928.

The agent on 17 July issued a statement to the press trying to thrust all responsibility for strike on the Labour Union and argued that the proposed general strike was a complete negation of all constitutional methods of composing differences. But when he found that his threats as well as sweet words had no effect on the men and that the union was receiving considerable support throughout the line, he made his last desperate effort to divide the linemen and workshop staff by proposing, at the eleventh hour, that is, in the afternoon of 19 July, to submit the cases of menials and some outstanding grievances of the running staff to arbitration by the labour commissioner of Madras on condition that the strike was called off. This was obviously a device to trap the strike and the agent was not at all sincere about it, as later events have proved. The men therefore did right in summarily turning down his eleventh-hour proposal and the general strike commenced as previously decided upon in the midnight of 19 July 1928. The strike was considerably successful. The whole of the metre-gauge line Indian staff was cent per cent on strike and the broad gauge line also was considerably affected.

The whole duration of this strike was very short. It lasted for only ten days but it raged in all its full vigour, and during these ten days the working of the railway was completely dislocated. Workshopmen lay across the rails and stopped all trains. Mail trains and passenger trains from various directions were held up. The administration brought the military and the police into action immediately the strike started. Several strikers who committed satyagraha on the lines and held up trains were arrested, but in batches the workers continued to step into the breach created by the arrest of their comrades. The

menials, pointsmen and generally the whole of the low-paid staff were all on strike. Only some higher officers remained on duty and the Anglo-Indian members of the railway staff remained loyal. These loyalists had to do all the duties of menials.

The strike committees were busy addressing meetings of strikers at various points in Madras and other big stations. But the workers were not absolutely guided by the instructions of the strike committee. Once the strike was on, the strike committee fell into insignificance and in all their elemental fury the workers took control of the strike. The strikers placed boulders on the line to stop passage of trains, disconnected couplings between carriages and used all other devices to hold up trains. They mounted engines, disabled them by removing the fire. At several places in the countryside the strikers were violent and rails were removed, telegraph connections were cut, level-crossings were blocked and all means and methods were used to make any passage of trains impossible.

Because of the militancy of the workers and their determination to stop the working, police opened fire on strikers at various places and killed and wounded many persons, but this use of white terror went only to accentuate the fury of the strikers and in return the police were met at several places with retaliation by mob action. When ordinary running of trains had become impossible the authorities tried to run trains under police escort. At Mayavaram one such train was stopped by about two thousand strikers by committing satyagraha and lying on the rails. These satyagrahis were absolutely peaceful but the authorities and the police opened fire and several workers were wounded as a result of the firing and the buyonet charge.

But this ruthless repression and free use of police arms were not the only forces that the strikers had to meet. I have already mentioned the disruptive action of Messrs Kirk and Shiva Rao. But that was about a period when general workers' opinion was being formed and crystallised in favour of the general strike. At that stage and

during that process of propaganda, if Messrs Kirk and Shiva Rao genuinely felt that the strike was an injurious weapon, it can for the sake of argument be granted that they were at that stage entitled to propagate their view and see if they could muster the workers' support. But once the workers had taken decision and once the strike had already begun, it is not excusable for anybody who calls himself a labourite, to continue his disruptive activity and dissuade any section of workers from the course chalked out by the conscious majority of their class. No one who is sincere about workingclass interest will ever justify any such action when a strike is on. But for the opportunist interest of Messrs Kirk, Shiva Rao & Co these considerations of workingclass conduct are of secondary importance.

It is not therefore surprising that in the midst of the strike and when the workers were engaged in a life-and-death struggle against the overwhelming forces of the railway administration combined with the police and military forces of the government, and when their ordinary peaceful activities of strike, such as picketing and satyagraha, were met with regular organised terrorism. Messrs Shiva Rao and Co, instead of coming out to condemn the brutality of the government, openly came out to condemn the strikers and the strike leaders. Just when the strike had commenced, that is, on 21 July 1928, Mr Shiva Rao addressing a workers' meeting on behalf of the Provincial Trade Union Congress, of which he was the president, condemned the strike leaders of the SIR as communists and declared that all possibilities of settlement had not been exhausted before the general strike was declared.

This was clearly a stab in the back, the most cowardly act, the worst kind of treachery imaginable. By this treacherous act the hands of the government and the railway authorities were only strenghtened and during the days that followed, they practised with unrestricted freedom all sorts of terrorism to break the strike.

However, in spite of all oppression, the force of the

strike was maintained and on 21 July the administration had to suspend all trains except through trains on the broad gauge. Towards the midnight of 21 July the No 3 Boat Mail running towards Madras capsised and two bogey third-class carriages telescoped owing to the defect of the line. The indiscriminate terrorism of the authorities, similarly, was responsible for acts of retaliation on the part of the strikers, who, often at the instigation of agents provocateurs, destroyed engines, rakes etc. and even belaboured Anglo-Indian and Indian blacklegs and loyalists. In Madras several thousand workers went in procession through the city and blocked the road in front of the railway police office, demanding the release of arrested workers.

At Vellapuram the Trivandrum Express was stopped by workers by offering satyagraha and the police injured about fifty workers by very severe bayonet charge.

The agent was furious at the success of the strike and he issued his next fatwa declaring that such of the strikers as would be convicted during the strike would not be taken back in service and their gratuity would be confiscated. But this fatwa went the way which several others had gone previously and he had to suspend night running of his through trains as well, for fear of accidents. On 23 the Madura Passenger was wrecked between Kodaikanal Road and Ambaturai stations. And now the administration had to resort as a matter of safeguard, to the running of a pilot engine before every train.

In the meantime the government also was not idle. Orders were issued to all district magistrates to use emergency powers to break the strike. The chief secretary to the government of Madras hurried down to Trichinopoly accompanied by the agent of the South Indian Railway and in consultation with the inspector-general of police brought in further reinforcements to the police force engaged in terrorising the strikers. Simultaneously with this preparation the government launched new attack on the workers. Comrades Singaravelu and Sarcar, the two prominent leaders of the workers, were arrested on 23

and several raids were carried out on the offices of the union at several places, on the office of the *Thozhilali*, the union paper, and houses of several committee members of the union. The chief presidency magistrate of Madras issued orders under s. 144 CPC, prohibiting meetings and processions of the strikers or other public meetings held in Madras City to support and express sympathy with the struggle of the SIR strikers, for a period of two months. This prohibition of the expression of public opinion is a very significant point, because the naked repression carried on by government over the strikers had excited great indignation amongst the general public and general sympathy for the workers was growing. To allow free expression of that sympathy would have meant undoing of all the treacherous activities of Messrs Shiva Rao & Co.

The example of the chief presidency magistrate of Madras was copied all over the districts, and meetings, processions and demonstrations of the strikers were banned. Several members of the strike committee and other local leaders of the strike as well as some of the most active workers were arrested. Similarly several members of the central committee of the SIR Labour Union were arrested. Mr D. Krishnaswami Pillai, the president of the central committee, was arrested on 25 July. After the arrest of the strike committee members and other leading workers of the union and especially after the arrest of Mr Krishnaswami Pillai who was directing the operations of the strike, the workers everywhere became completely disabled.

To add to the confusion the local Labour Union officialdom at Trichinopoly, who were under the influence of Messrs Kirk and Shiva Rao and were not very enthusiastic about the strike but were forced into it by the pressure of the rank and file, immediately after the arrest of Mr Krishnaswami Pillai seized the opportunity and wired to the labour commissioner of Madras and Sir George Rainy, Simla, requesting arbitration regarding the increase of menials' wage, redress of all running staff's



grievances, payment of lockout wages and absorption of surplus men after voluntary resignations and also asking government to issue definite instructions to the agent immediately.

Because of this confusion the workers were at a loss to know what to do. Their trusted leaders were all jailed and Shiva Rao & Co. began to give their defeatist advice of surrender. In the meantime the agent took advantage of this confusion and indecision and began to recruit new men. Under elaborate police protection they tried to resume the working of the line. Gradually therefore the workers began to return to work. To stimulate the process, other prominent members of the strike propaganda committee were arrested by the 26 and a situation arose when all the officials of the union were in jail and the carrying out of the usual routine became impossible. The money was locked up in the bank and could not be withdrawn as the persons authorised to withdraw it were in jail and were out off from their comrades on strike. This situation affected considerably the position of the strike and even the ordinary work of keeping the workers at several places informed about the strike situation in general became very difficult. The workers felt cut off from union connection and this was in several places responsible for their drifting back to work.

By 26 July the broad gauge section began to function though not quite normally. The night running of trains was not resumed for a week more. On 27 Mr Narayanaswami, the secretary of the strike committee, was arrested and with him the strike practically collapsed. Podanur workers resumed work by 27 and only Madura and Trichinopoly section was not yet normal. On 28 and 29 that section also began working. On the same evening the strike committee of the SIR Union met with whatever members were left free and called off the strike with effect from 6 a.m. of 30 July and on 31 July the agent notified the commencement of work at Podanur and Golden Rock workshops and announced 4 August as the last day of resumption.

With the calling off of the strike the real workers' struggle was practically over. The railway authorities had won and the workers had resumed unconditionally...

More than forty strikers were convicted during the strike under the Indian railways act and were given sentences ranging up to ten years' R.I. Eighteen more leaders of the workers, including Comrades Singaravelu and Sarcar, were prosecuted under sections 126 and 128 of the Indian railways act as well as under sections 120 B and 109 CPC. They were convicted for terms varying from 6 months to ten years.

Representations were made to the government of Madras that in view of the end of the strike these persons should be released. The SIR Union also circulated to all members of the legislatures, provincial and central, an appeal requesting them to move the government to grant redress to the genuine and deeprooted grievances of the SIRmen. The government had therefore to come out with a communique. The government of Madras by its communique of 31 August 1928 reiterated its statement that as the strike had ended there was no point left for considerations and that here was no necessity for the appointment of any arbitration board. Regarding the request of releasing the convicted strikers, it stated that they could not do so nor could they withdraw cases instituted against "peace-breakers and offenders against law".

These workers are still in jails and very recently a representation was made to the government demanding their release in view of the new "peace era" inaugurated by Mr Gandhi. But as expected, this request was turned down.

This brings to the close the review of the salient points of the SIR strike. This strike has a very prominent place in the history of the labour movement in India. It only lasted for ten days, but these ten days are a glorious chapter in the Indian workingclass struggle.

Meerut Record,

Extract from K. N. Joglekar's statement

## VIII. Ninth Session of AITUC

### 34. THE ALL-INDIA TRADE UNION CONGRESS, 1928

The Trade Union Congress met at the end of a year that is unparalleled in the history of the workingclass movement of India for its organised revolt against the conditions imposed upon the workers by the capitalists.

At a period there were more than 250,000 workers involved, in some of the struggles a definite revolutionary class aspect was given to the struggle and in some cases a reformist class-collaboration aspect.

It is my opinion that sufficient consideration was not given by the TUC to these most important struggles that took place during the year and the different aspects of them, in its failure to do this it failed to produce a definite policy for its relationship with the workers in their struggle against capitalism.

What is the position of the Indian working class? Are they on the offensive or the defensive? A review of last year's struggle this question can be answered and the answer can only be that it was defensive, almost every struggle was against worsened conditions. Attack, rationalisation and retrenchment were the order of the day. This was shown in important industries such as cotton, jute, iron and steel, and railways. While in the case of mining, transport, seamen, dock workers, etc. the slave-conditions remained unimproved. This was the gloomy picture before the TUC.

As if this position was not bad enough the capitalists had decided to extend their attack still further and attempt to suppress the growing revolt of the workers by taking away from them the right to strike through the proposed trade disputes bill to be brought in the assembly.

Within the TU Congress at Jharia there appeared a strong fraction led by the communists who were conscious of this position and who led the fight to make the TUC use the power of the workers in their struggle against capitalism.

The trade-union movement of India is young and weak and the attempts that were made at Jharia to lead it on to reformist lines must be vigorously fought.

We have sufficient examples of how the bureaucratic and reformist trade-union leadership of the British TU movement is using the movement as a bulwark for capitalism against the struggling workers and inducing them to accept rationalisation and worsened conditions, "Mondism", instead of organising them for an offensive against the capitalists.

Another reason why the reformist leadership must be fought is because the expansion of capitalism in India will not be on the same lines as the expansion of capitalism in Britain. During the period of expansion in Britain it was possible to give improved conditions and "concessions", but in the early days of capitalist development in India despite cheap labour etc., but because of intensified world competition, we find her introducing rationalisation and capitalism bitterly opposing any "concessions", or betterment of conditions. These points must be taken into consideration when formulating the policy of the Congress.

What happened at the Jharia congress? Much time was taken up by discussing whether they should recommend delegates to the international labour conference to be held at Geneva under the auspices of the ILO. Now everyone knows that the ILO is an appendage of imperialism and as such is not in existence to function in the interest of the workers. Further, it is overwhelmingly controlled by the capitalists of the countries most interested. The communist group took their stand for complete severance with this imperialist body, the only logical position the Indian Trade Union Congress could take.

Here the vacillating Dewan Chamanlal threw his support on the side of cooperation with imperialism and was

assisted by bourgeois reformists like Mahabubul Hua Shiva Rao etc., and the congress agreed to nominate delegates.

This showed one of the inconsistencies of the congress, because they carried a resolution on imperialism, pointing out that "Imperialism was a form of capitalist class government intended to facilitate and perpetuate the exploitation of the workers, both white and coloured, and declares that the only safeguard against exploitation lies in the creation by the working class of a corresponding nature of class unity, solidarity, and consciousness and desire to bring about the greatest possible solidarity and coordinated activity on the part of the trade unions throughout the world to oppose imperialism."

This resolution made it quite clear the position the congress should have taken, another very important item was international affiliation. On this matter Dewan Chamanlal, the champion acrobat, appears again. A letter had been received from the International Federation of Trade Unions, "Second International", calling for affiliation to the same. At the same time two large trade unions had tabled a resolution calling for affiliation to the RILU "Third International".

Dewan Chamanlal said in Europe this year according to *Inprecor*, 2 November 1928, that "the British Labour Party, together with the Second International, are the advanced guard of British and European imperialism in order to prevent and postpone the emancipation of the colonial peoples."

The TU Congress decided to affiliate to neither internationals. *The Times*, 1 January 1929, says: "Dewan Chamanlal again won." Thus preventing affiliation to the RILU. Again Chamanlal assisted the Congress along pro-imperialist lines, he fought the suggestion to link up with the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat. This body has already done good work in drawing together the organisations of workers from such exploited countries as China, Indonesia, the Philippines, Korea, Japan, etc. He supported the idea which was germinated by the ILO to call an

“Asiatic labour conference” in 1929, with the assistance of the bought agents of Japanese imperialism such as Bunji Suzki, Matsuka, Yonekubu & Co, supporters of the Second International, thus ignoring the PPTUS, and the work done by it.

By this action Dewan Chamanlal had assisted the treacherous betrayal of the Indian workers through the TUC to the handmaids of imperialism.

The two important questions I have dealt with broadly are national and international aspects. On the national basis with many of these “trade-union leaders” preparing to sell the workers to the capitalists through boards of conciliation and Whitley councils, a vigorous campaign must be carried on against this. The resolution calling for a general strike against the trade disputes bill must be carried forward, and the workers prepared to take up a militant offensive for better conditions.

On the international question the workers’ organisations ie the TUC, must sever connections with all pro-imperialist bodies that is the ILO, and the Second International and other subsidiary organisations, and link up with those organisations which are carrying on a fearless struggle against imperialisms and for the freedom of the exploited masses of the world [and] to make a united front of all oppressed colonial peoples to effectively fight imperialism.

Meerut Record,  
P 661

B. F. BRADLEY

### 35. CONSPIRACY OF IMPERIALISM IN THE ALL-INDIA TRADE UNION CONGRESS

The announcement of the Simon commission and the ignoble part played by the labour-imperialist leadership of British labour exposed the character of the rightwing

socialist and labour movement in England. MacDonald allied himself with Birkenhead-Baldwin, not as an individual but as the personified expression of a definite tendency in the rightwing socialist movement of Europe.

This movement is mainly represented by the Second International of Labour and Socialist Parties of Europe, with its headquarters in Amsterdam, and by the International Federation of Trade Unions, Amsterdam. What is the activity of these two bodies and in what way are we affected by them?

The achievements of these two institutions speak of their character. The Second International supported the white terrorist governments of Poland, Austria, Lithuania to suppress democracy and popular institutions, to shoot down workers and subject them all to the control of the imperialists of the postwar period. The International Federation of Trade Unions is the labour-mask worn by imperialism to hoodwink the unwary. The IFTU is practically dominated by the British and German trade unions, under the leadership of MacDonalites. Naturally, the result is that it acts in close cooperation with Geneva, the avowedly open show of the League of Nations and is opposed to the radical movements of national emancipation in the colonial countries.

**WE ARE IMMEDIATELY THREATENED BY THE  
SPREADING NETWORK OF THESE BODIES**

The new economic policy of world imperialism is to industrialise and exploit their colonial possessions. This intense gravitation of capital to the colonies and the eastern countries, particularly, intensifies the national struggle, as it has done in India, China, Persia, in the small mid-American states etc. Industrialisation and exploitation require normal peaceful conditions, therefore, the heavy iron hand with which nationalist outbursts are being put down all the world over. It also means that imperialism must see that labour movements and mass activities do not assume anti-imperialist character. And imperialism

has arranged to do this partly through heavy repression and partly through the Second International, the IFTU and such other rightwing elements in the leadership of world-labour, like MacDonald, Lansbury, Begin, Sassenbach and a host of them, scattered throughout the world.

In order to give effect to this mental conspiracy and orientation to imperialism on the part of the rightwing labour of Europe, the IFTU last year in its Paris session passed a resolution to make intense efforts to bring all the colonial trade-union movements in its fold and the honour of initiating the move was taken by the general council of the British Congress.

They started to draw into their net China, India, Africa, Java, etc. China refused to be beguiled, in Africa the radical active elements, wishing to give a direct fight to white domination were expelled from the movement to secure affiliation. Java showed a cold shoulder. Dutch imperialism shot Javanese hindus and muslims by thousands. The IFTU and the Second International sat amusingly looking on in Amsterdam under the very breach of Dutch imperialism. And now remains India.

The plan is deeplaid to draw India into the net of the Second International and the IFTU and the MacDonalites. The Simon commission has centered the attention of all on the National Congress and the boycott agitation. The All India Trade Union Congress is already neglected by the major part of the nationalist leadership, though the TUC represents an affiliated membership of over a lakh.

At such an opportune time of MacDonalites, in conjunction with the IFTU, have shipped here Messrs Purcell, Halsworth, Fenner Brockway, Thurtle, Mardy Jones, a whole wagonload of 'labour leaders', to study Indian conditions. A real drama of hoodwink started. One supported the commission, another waxed hot against imperialism, a third got indignant at the Indian CID, a fourth wept over the bad housing conditions and quietly all are moving with the bosses of the All India Trade Union Congress to secure Indian affiliation to the IFTU at Amsterdam.



Purcell, whom the *Herald* (Bombay) exposed on his very coming, was the president of the Paris session of the IFTU and is probably deputed with a double game. At the Kanpur session of the TUC he tried hard to avoid condemnation of the session of the MacDonalites re. the Simon commission and if possible boycott also. But the bosses of the TUC though privately agreeing much with Purcell could not go so far for fear of the people. Now Purcell is playing another game. And it is to draw the Indian labour movement in the fold of the British right-wingers and make it safe for imperialism and the next labour-imperialist government of England.

Very few of people in the country are alive to the implications of our affiliation with the Amsterdamites. Very few have paid any attention to the subtle game of imperialism being played under masks.

The IFTU miserably failed to give a successful lead to the British miners. It failed to give a correct policy to the German people against American imperialism. It has failed to help the Chinese and Javanese masses. What can we expect from a body under the thumb of Purcell & Co, the League of Nations, working through Geneva labour office?

A host of locusts once started to study the conditions of the green trees in India. They brought fraternal greetings from the trees of their country. Our leaves embraced them with open hearts. The locusts opened their mouths and studied them profoundly! The locusts understood the leaf completely well! They were united. Only, the leaf did not survive to understand the locust and exchange fraternal greetings. It was being digested by the brother sitting on the *once green* stump on the tree! Our Indian brothers must beware of the locust trees in British labour leaders.

S. A. DANGE

Note: Appeared in Urdu *Kirti*, May 1928  
Meerut Record, P 545 (8)

### 36. WPP CIRCULAR ON AFFILIATION

We understand that at the executive council meeting of the All India Trade Union Congress to be held on 26 February at Delhi one of the subjects to be considered is:

“Consideration of the letter received from the International Federation of Trade Unions, Amsterdam, regarding the affiliation of the TUC to the IFTU, Amsterdam.”

This subject is a very important one and we desire, therefore, to draw your attention to it. Our TUC at its congress at Delhi in March 1927 decided that while in favour of international connections, it should undertake no affiliation until the two trade-union internationals, the International Federation of Trade Unions and the Red International of Labour Unions, were amalgamated. This decision was reaffirmed at the Kanpur congress in November last. These two decisions of the full congress should not be overridden by an executive council, which under section 19 of the constitution cannot act in contravention to the decisions of the open congress. The subject can only be reopened and decided upon by the next congress. If any resolution contrary to these is passed at Delhi, we request you to be alive to your right and protest against it. If the executive and officials of the TUC are so much in a hurry to reopen a subject very recently decided upon, they should have followed a more democratic way, that of asking opinions from all the trade unions by letters or holding a plebiscite of all unions, since it is quite clear to all that our unions or their representatives except a few are not rich enough to bear expenses to attend the executive committee meeting.

At the same time we wish to point out some further consideration. The argument is advanced by some leaders that as unity of the two internationals appears to be postponed indefinitely, we should not postpone affiliation indefinitely, but join one or the other. If this is accepted, the question arises which of the two internationals are we more in sympathy with? And which will be more helpful to us?

We ask you to bear in mind the records of the two organisations.

1. The IFTU is in close relations with the "Second International" (the federation of socialist parties) and their policies are in entire agreement. The parties of the Second International have nearly all made themselves notorious by supporting their capitalist governments, during imperialist wars, by joining in coalitions with capitalist governments, or even establishing their own governments, which have opposed workers' strikes, suppressed trade unions and other workingclass activities, sometimes with the greatest ferocity and bloodshed, increased armaments, and engaged in the suppression of movements of freedom in the colonial countries. The socialist parties, supported by the IFTU trade unions have done these things in Germany, Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary, France and Britain. We have lately had experiences of the attitude of Mr Ramsay MacDonald and the officials of the British Labour Party towards India. They have supported the Simon commission, condemned hartal and boycotts and accused Indians of having "inferiority complex". During the government of Mr MacDonald in 1924, the Bengal detenus were imprisoned, and the Kanpur "bolshevik" case victims were given four years' imprisonment each.

2. Owing to its weak and antiworkingclass policy, the IFTU is declining in strength. It is dominated by the British and German unions. The British contribution sank from 52,000 florins in 1924 to 36,000 in 1926, and the German from 89,000 to 54,000.

3. The IFTU is in close relations with the International Labour Office of the League of Nations, an institution run by the capitalists of Europe in their own interests.

4. The IFTU has systematically opposed unity with the RILU. At the last congress of the IFTU in Paris, August 1927, the corruption of this international was shown up. A private letter was produced from Mr Oudegeest to Mr Jouhaux (leading members of the committee) acknowledging the sincere desire of the RILU for unity, but arranging means whereby the projected unity could be stopped.

5. The most militant Chinese, Japanese and other Eastern and African labour organisations have refused to be associated with the reactionary IFTU. On the contrary, the Chinese and Japanese unions have joined the RILU. On the other hand, we ask you to remember that it was the RILU that helped most our general textile strike of 1925, and that was first to help Kharagpurmen, without even waiting for our appeal.

We have placed before you facts as they are, without prejudice and are of the opinion that the interest of the masses of workers in India demand accordingly, that if any affiliation is considered it should be in favour of the RILU.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
of the Workers & Peasants Party, Bombay

Meerut Record,  
P 87

### 37. THE TRADE UNION CONGRESS AND THE COMMUNISTS

It is necessary [in order] to stop the disruptive tactics of some individuals in the Indian trade-union movement to draw attention to some of the remarks recently made by certain prominent trade-union leaders. Mr E. Kirk, who attended the last session of the Trade Union Congress at Jharia, has got a rather bad attack of the "red bogey". Perhaps it is because he stayed with me at the Dak Bungalow at Jharia.

However what has appeared in the *Times* and *Statesman* written by Kirk will not help to build the trade-union movement in India, but rather destroy it. His statement was eagerly seized on by these organs of capitalism and enemies of the working class, in order to prove that the activity of the organised workers must be either curbed or stopped. But I am not as much concerned with the abuse of the capitalist press, or repression by the government advocating, as Mr Kirk is made to advocate, in these

organs of capitalism, that there should be a split in the trade-union movement.

Mr Kirk apparently is not prepared, it seems, by his statement to abide by a majority decision. He says that those who do not agree with him must be driven out or there must be separation. This advocacy of disruption must be received with glee by the capitalists in India, and satisfaction to know they have such a loyal ally within the ranks of labour. The Trade Union Congress should deal with Kirk, Shiva Rao and others who are carrying on this disruptive propaganda. They talk about constructive and genuine trade-unionism. Fine catchwords like these mean to those who use them trade-union organisation on the lines of class collaboration and non-militancy. Despite all that has been written and said about the terrible conditions of Indian labour these individuals would attempt to use the trade-union movement of India to collaborate with the capitalists to perpetuate slave conditions and make the worker satisfied with his lot.

#### NOT THE WAY OF THE WORKER

However, there is one pleasing feature about this year's Trade Union Congress, that is, that what these non-workers say is not the way of the workers. The workers that attended this congress at Jharia showed a consciousness and determination to make the Congress a fighting organisation. This was made clear and it was the outsiders in the movement who were putting the brake on all the time.

Another very important factor that makes Kirk whimper is the point he makes about the communists and left wing voting solidly all the time and having closer mutual understanding. The fact that they had a definite policy in relation to all the issues that came before the congress should be praised, not decried. Then he goes on to say that the other members of the Congress were, generally speaking, disunited. This is only natural, and what to expect from people who attend the congress just as an annual gathering or to get a trip to Geneva. These very argu-

ments prove that the communists and left wing were the only section at the congress who were concerned about giving it the correct policy and making the trade-union movement a militant machine that could be used by the workers in their fight against capitalism, and for better conditions.

### WHY THEY ARE DISUNITED

It is for the workers to understand why these people that Kirk describes as disunited, are disunited and have no policy. There are many reasons. Many of them are in the trade-union movement, not for the movement, but for personal reasons. It is thought by some to be an easy stepping stone to the councils and assembly. Some attempt to centre the movement in themselves, and so on, but none have a considered policy to organise the workers to face their problems and a common enemy. As is proved by Kirk, the communists are the only people that have given that consideration to the problems facing the workers and know what they want and where they are going.

Let us see what happened at the trade-union congress at Jharia. Personally I am not altogether satisfied with the result of the congress, but however it marks a considerable step forward in the development of the Indian trade-union movement. The question that took up most time in discussion was whether we should send delegates to the International Labour Conference at Geneva this year. On this matter there was a scramble of those "disunited elements" to support the sending of delegates, possibly with idea that they might get free trip to Europe. As far as this question is concerned, the communists had a decided policy, they opposed the sending of delegates. Some of the reasons given were that the International Labour Office is an appendix of imperialism, and is controlled by the particular capitalists and governments concerned. Further, rarely do the findings of the International Labour Congress get taken any notice of or operated by the governments or employers concerned, if the findings go in favour of the workers.

### THEIR OBJECT ACHIEVED

Despite the fact that imperialism does not operate in the interest of the workers and that the workers are organising to fight imperialism, as was shown by a resolution passed by the congress the day before which pointed out that imperialism was a form of capitalist-class government intended to facilitate and perpetuate the exploitation of all workers, both white and coloured, and which declared that the only safeguard against exploitation lies in the creation by the working class of a corresponding nature of class unity, solidarity and consciousness, and desire to bring about the greatest possible solidarity and coordinated activity on the part of the trade unions throughout the world to oppose imperialism, and this resolution was passed unanimously on the second day, on the third day those disunited elements decided to cooperate with imperialism through the ILO. The communists vigorously opposed this illogical position the trade-union congress was taking but Kirk and his disunited friends won the day, free trips to Geneva were secured and many delegates sat back with relief, their object of attending Jharia had been achieved.

### AN INTERESTING POINT

The next question to be dealt with was international affiliation, whether the Congress should affiliate to the IFTU or the RILU. Many of the disunited delegates were leaving the room, they did not know what the IFTU or the RILU stood for and did not want to know. I noted an interesting point in relation to this matter. Two large unions affiliated to the TUC had sent in resolutions calling for affiliation to the Red International of Labour Unions, but no union had called for affiliation to the reactionary IFTU. The IFTU question was raised in a letter from the IFTU itself. Our disunited friends had dwindled considerably after Geneva, and they were ready for a compromise which was suggested by Chamanlal that, until unity had been achieved by the internationals concerned, the Trade Union Congress would affiliate to none. This was gladly accept-

ed by the disunited in the fear that the TUC might have turned another volte-face and affiliated to the RILU thereby carrying out the resolution of the day before and the fight against imperialism.

### SNUB TO THE BRITISH TUC

Then came the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat, another red scare. Here Dewan Chamanlal came to the assistance of the disunited, advocating an Asiatic Labour Congress to be held in Bombay with the assistance of imperialist Japanese labour representatives such as Suzuki. Here Chamanlal according to the *Times* makes a good speech accusing J. Ryan and myself of communism and showed that the PPTUS was a government-banned affair. We all know the government bans many things, especially as far as India is concerned. The *Times* put its praise in the right place, the question was put to the vote and Chamanlal and the disunited won. But there was that solid vote of the communists still there every time. The Workers' Welfare League of India was also under the cloud of red connection, despite the good work it had done for the Indian trade-union movement during the last year. On this point the TUC gave a snub to the British Trades Union Congress and broke with them, it was decided to have no agent at all in England.

The congress went on to agree to the affiliation to the League against Imperialism. This was carried almost unanimously and was one of the good points of the congress. Then our friend Kirk seemed surprised that the communists should have the audacity to put a candidate up for president of the congress. On this point I should like to make it clear that our candidate was a worker, a railwayman, also he was a member and an official of a trade union and had worked in the TU movement some years, but this did not matter. The position had got to be saved from the "red". So J. Nehru, who has none of these qualifications, is put up for president against the worker, the disunited supported him, as Kirk says, not because they like him or his policy but to stop the communist getting in.



On the question of relationship of the Congress to the All-Parties' Convention the Moscow hand is seen again, because the congress laid down certain demands to be placed before the convention, such as the establishment of a socialist republic government in British India and Indian states, universal adult suffrage, freedom of speech, free compulsory education, nationalisation of services, and nonenactment of repressive measures. These demands were opposed as being too extreme, but as another good point to the congress the demands were agreed to.

Among the many resolutions such as general demands of 8-hour day, minimum living wage, etc. and resolutions for individual trades, two important resolutions were agreed to, one for the setting up of trades councils in all towns where there are trade unions, and the other was on the proposed trade disputes bill to be brought in the assembly.

#### TRADE DISPUTES BILL

The resolution on the trade disputes bill laid the following points down: the congress condemns the bill as a whole, being a reactionary measure designed to deprive the workers of the right to strike, and calls upon the trade-union movement to prepare for a general strike if the bill becomes law. The only way in our opinion to fight this bill is by the organised power of the workers; of course any talk of strike upsets some. However, the resolution was carried. It is now for the trade unions, provincial committees, and EC of TUC to prepare to carry it out.

The congress was got through despite those elements that had to decide questions on the spur of the moment. It was a tug-of-war between bourgeois reformist cooperation with imperialism, and an attempt to make the Congress give a real workingclass expression. The communist group worked well and deserved the praise that Kirk pays them in the *Statesman*. They concentrated on making the trade-union movement of India a live body, an active body. Their object was to make the Congress reflect the feelings and

wishes of the workers who today are living in slavery. They wanted to make the TUC the machine that is going to free them from the bonds of capitalism and imperialism, and despite disruptionists like Kirk and Shiva Rao they will succeed.

B. F. BRADLEY

Meerut Record,  
P 1206(1)C

### 38. MESSAGE FROM RED INTERNATIONAL OF LABOUR UNIONS

The executive bureau of the Red International of Labour Unions sends through your congress heartiest greetings to the brave Indian proletariat struggling in such onerous conditions against native capital and imperialist violence and oppression.

Your congress meets at a time of exceptional importance for the Indian working class. After the lull of the last few years the Indian proletariat is awakening to new life and increasingly realising that it is a class opposing another class.

Just at a time when the living and labour conditions of the Indian workers have been going from bad to worse, the foreign and the Indian capitalists are conducting an offensive against the beggarly wages of the Indian workers and through methods of rationalisation are endeavouring to increase still more the exploitation of the workers and women-workers who are living in semistarvation.

The answer to the growing exploitation and worsening position of the broad masses was the strike movement caught up by hundreds of thousands of workers and women workers. The strikes of the textile workers, railwaymen and municipal workers of Bombay, Lilloah and other industrial centres are of stupendous significance both of the Indian workers and for the working class throughout the world. In point of fact, what have the strikes during

the last year shown? They have demonstrated (1) that the Indian capitalists unitedly with the British imperialists have taken the most brutal measures to suppress the strike movement; (2) that the British government in India have not only employed armed forces to suppress the workers but they are introducing special legislation (the trade disputes bill) to cripple the workingclass movement; (3) that a section of the trade-union leaders with the assistance of prominent nationalist politicians held back the movement and continually sought to compromise with the capitalists, putting more hopes on the goodwill of the exploiters than on the forces of the working masses; (4) that, despite their weak organisation, the broad masses of workers and women-workers chose the right road when they came out on a wide front, setting up strike organs in the process of the struggle, and, lastly, (5) that, for victory over the capitalists, strong mass trade unions are necessary imbued with the implacable spirit of the class struggle, trade unions that will struggle resolutely against the capitalists and against the adherents of class-collaboration in the ranks of the workers themselves.

These lessons must surely be noted. The practical experience gained by the masses during the last few months of struggle, when class confronted class, is the most important acquisition of the Indian proletariat since its existence. All the weak and strong points of the movement must be studied and conclusions drawn for the impending class-struggles. The experience of the last strikes makes it imperative that every class-conscious worker should answer the question: What road has the TU movement of the India to follow? *Is it to be the road of class-struggle, or that of class-collaboration?* In other words, will the trade union movement of India be subservient to and follow the lead of its capitalists and the foreign capitalists, or will it organise the masses and lead them in the struggle against capitalism and imperialism.

This question is raised for the Indian workers not merely by the position at home but by the external position of India. Being the richest colony of Great Britain, India

is subject to constant "concern" on the part of British imperialism. With the growth of consciousness on the part of the wide masses of toilers in India, the British imperialists are confronted with the question of new ways and means of consolidating their domination. While, on the one hand, the conservative government is suppressing with fire and sword the emancipatory movement in India, on the other hand it is endeavouring to influence India through its democratic and socialist agents. During the last few years the workers of India have been in a position to convince themselves that the only aim of the representatives of the Labour Party (e.g. Graham Pole and Co) and of the Trades Union general council (Purcell, Tom Shaw, etc) was to dissuade the masses from taking up the revolutionary struggle against British imperialism. If there were any doubts on this score, it would be sufficient to remember the attitude of the Anglo-Indian authorities to these "labour" representatives and to contrast it with their treatment of the representatives of the real class-conscious workers of England (e.g., Allison, Spratt).

The imperialist character of the British Labour Party and the general council of the British Trades Union Congress is so obvious that it is remarked on by not only such leaders of the labour movement as Chamanlal, but also by such moderate leaders of the nationalist movement as Motilal Nehru and others. Still, when Purcell and Hallsworth, these commercial travellers of British imperialism, arrived in India, there were leaders in the Indian trade-union movement who not only welcomed them in their destructive tasks, but concluded an agreement with them to destroy the Workers' Welfare League, which directly connected the Indian trade-union movement with the British working class, and chose instead as their agents the very men who are trying to stifle the Indian struggle for independence and who are supporting British imperialism in its exploitations of the Indian proletariat. Is it possible that the congress can fail to condemn this shameful business? The working class and its leaders must definitely reject any and every attempt at compromise with the im-

perialist agents, who have shipped in their imperialist goods under the flag of Amsterdam.

Messrs Purcell, Hallsworth & Co, these agents of British imperialism and of the Amsterdam International aspired to take advantage of the paramount need of the working class of India to end this isolation, they sought to make use of its lack of connections with the world labour movement. They urged the labour organisations of India to affiliate to the Amsterdam International, as if such affiliation would put an end to the isolation and estrangement of the Indian labour movement. This would not at all be the case. An international built up on the basis of national egoism and of support of imperialist designs, far from giving any thing real to the labour movement of the colonies, can only prove exceedingly harmful. Why? Because the fundamental task of the Amsterdam International is to *weaken* and to disorganise the struggle against imperialism, and to surrender the toiling masses to imperialist exploitation. Look at the decisions of all its congresses and you will find no resolution on independence for the colonies, but instead you will find scores of decisions taken directed against those who are struggling resolutely against imperialism.

You will not find there any single decision for the unity of the world trade-union movement, for the Amsterdam International is engaged systematically from day to day in disrupting the ranks of the workers in order to facilitate the attack of the capitalists. The Amsterdam International represents the greatest obstacle in the creation of a united world trade-union international. *Whoever is striving for unity cannot support Amsterdam.*

The All-India Trade Union Congress endeavoured to put an end to the isolation of the Indian labour movement by setting up connections with the Pan Pacific Secretariat, but thanks to the ban of the British government this effort was frustrated. It is hardly likely that the Indian trade-union movement can continue to remain isolated from the labour movement throughout the world. The

question naturally arises: Whither and with whom? With the reformist or the revolutionary wing of the TU movement? With the Amsterdam International or with the Red International of Labour Unions? We are fully aware that the same two tendencies, the reformist and the revolutionary, that are struggling in the world labour movement are likewise struggling in the TU movement of India. The experience of recent strikes in India have shown clearly how dangerous is reformism for the labour movement, which has to struggle against the native bourgeoisie and the foreign imperialists. The working class, striving for victory, must extricate itself from reformist ideology and reformist policy, it must put forward new leaders to take the place of those who fail to carry out their class duty, in a word, for each one who surrenders it must put forward hundreds of new fighters and scores of new leaders.

But this is not all. In order that the struggle shall give the maximum results, it is imperative to maintain organic connections with a militant international, the greatest unity possible being set up in the workers' ranks in each country and on an international scale. The militant Red International of Labour Unions fighting for the unity of the international trade-union movement appeals to you, workers of India: Consolidate your ranks. Draw the million of workers and women-workers into the TU organisations. From out of the rank and file, from the masses themselves, put forward new leaders. Pay no heed to the exhortations of the agents of Baldwin & Co. Have nothing to do with the social-imperialists of the Amsterdam International. Set up connections with the fighting Red International of Labour Unions and jointly with it struggle for international trade-union unity, for unity in the struggle against capitalism and imperialism.

Long Live the Militant Working Class of India!

Long Live Independent India Liberated from Imperialism!

Long Live a Single Class International Embracing the  
Unions of All Countries, Races and Continents!

*Executive Bureau Red International of Labour Unions.*

*General Secretary: A. LOZOVSKY*

27 October 1928

Meerut Record,  
P 1662

### 39. GREETINGS FROM THE ALL-RUSSIAN TRADE UNION'S CENTRAL COUNCIL

“Central Council of Trade Unions, USSR, sends your congress and entire proletarian India warm fraternal greetings on behalf of the entire Soviet trade-union movement. Although the working class of your country and your Trade Unions have little contact with the working class and the trade union movement of USSR, we both though separated by great distance and insufficient connection pursue the same proletarian class aims and tasks. The great strikes of workers of India show that India's proletariat, notwithstanding united opposition of British imperialists and Indian employers, has taken decisive action to press its class demands.

This action of the broad masses of the Indian proletariat has perturbed British imperialists and Indian employers and together with them the agents of international capital, European social-reformers who are attempting to subject the labour movement in your country to their influence and leadership. The delegations who came in recent times from British Labour Party and General Council of Trade Unions—Graham Pole, Tom Shaw, Purcell, Hallsworth—being agents of British imperialism, had as their task to divert the working class of your country from this struggle and subject the labour movement in India to reformist influence and guidance.

None of these delegates took the stand for the indepen-

dence of the Indian people, none dared take a stand against British imperialists, these oppressors of India for centuries. All these delegates called upon you to join the Amsterdam International, depicting your adhesion to that International as a step forward unity. But your joining the Amsterdam International will not advance the cause of unity.

The Amsterdam International is the organiser of split in the trade-union movement in all countries and is the obedient tool in the hands of the Robber League of Nations and carries out on an international scale the same policy of class-collaboration and treachery, which the leaders of the British trade-union movement are pursuing.

Indian workers some time ago spoke in favour of the Anglo-Russian Unity Committee. But these same, Purcell, Tom Shaw, Hallsworth and others, having betrayed the general strike—the heroic struggle of the British miners and having helped the British executioners to strangle the workers, who were carrying on the revolutionary struggle for their emancipation, have now torn up in the interest of the British bourgeoisie, the agreement of brotherhood and friendship concluded with the USSR central council of Trade Unions.

These people are pursuing with regard to trade unions of our country the same policy which the conservative government of Baldwin carried out with regard to the Soviet worker's government, thereby aiding the capitalists in preparing now imperialist wars and first of all to launch an attack on the proletarian state of the USSR. Having done all this before the eyes of the working class of the whole world, these agents of British capital have the audacity to assert in India, that the break-up of the Anglo-Russian committee occurred because of the fault of the trade-union movement of the USSR.

The Soviet trade-union movement follows with the greatest attention the grave struggle of the Indian proletariat against foreign and local employers. In order to conquer, it is necessary to create powerful revolutionary trade unions and steadily carry on the struggle against



imperialists and their agents the midst of workers. We know how difficult your struggle is and how strong your enemies are. In this struggle you can count on the fraternal solidarity of the whole Soviet trade-union movement.

The organised trade-union movement of the USSR will be glad to welcome representatives of the Indian proletariat on the territory of the USSR. We hope you will participate in the Pacific Trade-Union conference summoned by the Pan-Pacific secretariat early August 1929 at Vladivostock where together with representatives of the USSR CCTU you will discuss all questions which are of interest to the labour movement on the Pacific Coast and in the whole world.

Down with British Imperialism !

Long live the Revolutionary Trade-Union Movement of India !

Long live the alliance of the workers of India and USSR!

Long live international proletariat and the unity of the World Trade-Union Movement !

*Presidium of the USSR Central Council of  
Trade Unions.*

**DOGAEV, Secretary**

Meerut Record, P 2086

*Inprecor*, Vol 8, No 77, 12 December 1928

#### 40. MESSAGE FROM THE ALL-CHINA LABOUR FEDERATION

The All-China Labour Federation sends comradely fraternal greetings to the toiling masses of India and wishes the Ninth All-India Trade Union Congress success. We wish your congress the greatest success in its endeavour to express and define a revolutionary program of action and to rally the rebellious working class and peasant masses for the struggles against exploitation and oppression.

The All-China Labour Federation is well aware of the enormous difficulties which are confronting your struggles for higher wages, shorter workday etc. We are well aware, likewise, of the trials you must undergo in the course of your arduous fight to overthrow foreign domination, to crush the rule of British imperialism, and to attain complete national independence and the liberation of the Indian working masses from subjugation and humiliation. All this we comprehend fully because we are in the very midst of such a struggle. The Chinese working class and peasant masses are fighting a life-and-death struggle against the combined counterrevolutionary forces—the imperialists and the Kuomintang. The masses under the leadership of the All-China Labour Federation are determined to drive out from China the British, Japanese, American and French imperialists, and to overthrow the Kuomintang and the Nanking government, the running dogs of the imperialists and the traitors to the Chinese revolution. Thus notwithstanding the raging white terror of the Kuomintang, the systematic and most ruthless mass-executions and massacres of revolutionary workers and peasants, strikes and political mass demonstrations of ever-increasing dimensions are frequently taking place. Last but not least, the mass uprisings of the peasants are spreading all over the country and large sections of southern China are already governed by the soviets, established and controlled by the local revolutionary workers, peasants and Red Army soldiers.

Of course, not only our own and your struggles but also the revolutionary movements of all other colonial and semicolonial peoples, and that of the workers and peasants in particular, will be greatly accelerated as soon as a revolutionary united mass front of all the oppressed and exploited against the capitalists and landlords, the militarists and imperialists as well as against the workingclass traitors will be set up and coordinated. The oppressed and exploited masses of all countries, nationalities and races must realise once and for all that a united front with, or the leadership of such people as the MacDonaldis, Purcellis,

Citrines, Bunji Suzukis, Chiang Kaisheks, Nehrus, etc. inevitably lead the workers and peasants movements to the most crushing defeats. It is, therefore, essential to expose before the masses the treacherous policies and activities of these people and eliminate them without fail from our class organisations. Unless such traitors are discarded and their reformist policies repudiated national independence in India or elsewhere is not attainable and the emancipation of the working class and peasant masses is impossible.

Hence with profound appreciation we learned the fact that the restless and rebellious masses of your country are in deep sympathy with Soviet Russia and its aspirations: that your Trade Union Congress took steps in the promotion of a revolutionary united front and trade-union unity on the Pacific by selecting delegates to attend the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Conference in our country last year, and that it had condemned the British government in refusing passports to the delegates.

The All-China Labour Federation followed with the greatest sympathy the determined fight of the Bombay textile workers in their strike, the brave struggles of the railway and the steel workers: the boycott of the Simon commission as well as the militant action taken by your delegates at the so-called "commonwealth labour conference" at London and the Brussels congress of the Second International. We rejoiced at their walking out of these social-imperialist gatherings which not only called upon the workers to pursue the so-called industrial peace policy "Mondism" but even went on record in opposition to national independence for India and other colonies, as well as most viciously attacking Soviet Russia, the only real friend of the colonial peoples and the stronghold of the world proletariat. Obviously the words uttered by your delegate, Chamanlal, that "the British Labour Party, together with the Second International, are the advance-guard of British and European imperialism in order to prevent and postpone the emancipation of the colonial

peoples" are strikingly true and marvellous words which your congress and all of us should take due notice of.

However, at the same time we learn with regret that many of your Trade Union Congress leaders have joined hands with the treacherous leaders of the British Labour Party, the general council of the British Trades Union Congress, the Second International and its tail-end the Amsterdam International (International Federation of Trade Unions with headquarters at Amsterdam). Indeed we were astonished to read in your official publication the urging by Mr N. M. Joshi, general secretary of your Trade Union Congress, to the effect that the All-India Trade Union Congress should join the Amsterdam International, the systematic splitter of the world trade-union movement and the most persistent saboteur of all efforts by the trade unions of Soviet Russia and the Red International of Labour Unions (with headquarters at Moscow) to bring about trade-union unity the world over. We read with deep disgust your secretary's call to join and strengthen the Amsterdam International, the most cunning disruptor of mass strikes, liberation movement uprisings and the upholder of the counterrevolution in China. Not less outrageous and treacherous is the proposal of Mr Joshi that the All-India Trade Union Congress in cooperation with Bunji Suzuki, Matsuoka, Yonekubu & Co, the Japanese champions of the Amsterdam International and the bought agents of Japanese Imperialism, should through the so-called Geneva Labour Office convene an "Asiatic labour conference" thus purposely ignoring and undermining the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat, established at the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Conference last year as previously referred to, and composed of the trade unions of Soviet Russia, Australia, Indonesia, China, the Philippines, Korea, and the leftwing trade unions of Japan, England, France, America and Canada. Yes, consciously and deliberately, Joshi, Bunji Suzuki & Co are striving to disrupt the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Congress to be convened by the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat in the summer of 1929.

Evidently Mr Joshi and his like are preparing to betray your Trade Union Congress as Mr Nehru and his like did it recently in your national independence movement or, as was the case with the Chiang Kaishek in our country last year. The betrayal in our country took place as soon as the workers and peasants became class-conscious and were fighting not only the foreign invader imperialists but the native exploiters as well. In other words, as soon as the Chinese revolutionary masses established the eight-hour day, confiscated and redistributed the land, set up the workers and peasants government, etc., the bourgeoisie, feudalists, militarists, social-reformists and weakneed leaders of every description deserted the revolution and went over to camp of the counterrevolution and white terror. We presume that your revolutionary movement is rapidly approaching somewhat similar stage of development.

The All-China Labour Federation hopes that the All-India Trade Union Congress in session, and the local unions, or the rank and file in particular, will not follow the footsteps of Joshi & Co, but will formulate and promulgate fighting policies, and grasp our outstretched hand for a revolutionary united mass front under the leadership of the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat. We sincerely hope that your congress will not endorse social-imperialism nor join the Amsterdam International and thus permit the Joshis to throw the weight of your trade unions on the side of the bourgeoisie and its running dogs, the reformists and traitors. On the contrary, we hope that your trade unions will rather strengthen their connections and bonds with the trade unions of Soviet Russia and the Far-East, and that we will meet your representatives at the coming Pan-Pacific Trade Union Congress. We urge and call upon you to join hands with us in order to fight more effectively imperialism and the threatening imperialist war, to defend jointly Soviet Russia and with an increasing energy to foster the fight for the liberation of the oppressed colonial peoples and victory for the working class.

In conclusion the All-China Labour Federation extends

to your Trade Union Congress a cordial invitation to pay a visit to our country and to be an eyewitness to the brutal massacres of our comrades by the Kuomintang, the component part and friend of the Amsterdam and Second Internationals: to learn from the most authentic source the character and driving forces of the great Chinese revolution as well as to exchange with us views and revolutionary experiences.

Down with Imperialism and its Running Dogs!

Long Live the Revolutionary United Mass Front of All Oppressed and Exploited!

*All-China Labour Federation,*  
SON CHAO-JEN, *Chairman,*  
LOU TAN-HSIAN, *Secretary,*  
Shanghai, 10 October 1928

*Inprecor*, Vol 8, No 77,  
2 November 1928

## **PART II**





# INTRODUCTION

## I

The sixth congress of the Comintern is noted for the three main documents that it adopted, viz. (i) The programme of the Communist International; (ii) a statement on communist methods of struggle against imperialist war; and (iii) a thesis on the revolutionary movement in the colonies and semi-colonies.

We are concerned here particularly with the last one, ie the *Colonial Thesis* for short, which provoked a heated discussion. The main questions involved here are: (a) whether the advent of finance-capital, the latest phase of capitalism (or its imperialist phase) had brought distinctive and fundamental changes in the forms of colonial exploitation; (b) whether the era of imperialism necessarily led also to a corresponding process of industrialisation in the colonies; (c) whether arising from the appearance of an industrial proletariat there were fundamental changes in the colonies and particularly whether the colonial capitalist class remains a part of the national-revolutionary front in such countries as India. In other words the question was to what extent the national bourgeoisie in the colonies and semi-colonies gave up its oppositional role to the ruling imperialist power and sought alliance and sharing of power in the administration of these colonies and semi-colonies.

The points of controversy raged round the question of 'decolonisation'. This was just not a word and though always used in an inverted comma to indicate that its protagonists did not fully accept the implication of this word, as first used in the discussions at the Second International, the central points or bone of contention round which all

the Indian, British, Russian and some other comrades were almost evenly divided were the three points mentioned above.

This is how our comrade G. Adhikari himself had seen this controversy on 'decolonisation' in his article in *Marxist Miscellany* of December, 1975 (published on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the Communist Party of India):

"There is an opinion, which is held by many, that Roy (ie M. N. Roy—ed.) was the sole and only person who held this view, that in fact it was he who originated the theory which was sharply criticised at the sixth congress of the Comintern, when the whole question of industrialisation and that of a prospective compromise between the Indian national bourgeoisie and British imperialism was discussed in detail.

"However contemporary writings and speeches of communists do not uphold this point of view. As has been stated in the second volume of Documents this view was held by some others including R. P. Dutt.

"No communist ever held the view that a measure of industrialisation under imperialist aegis or tolerance could automatically create conditions for political and economic independence of India; though the emergence and the strengthening of the proletariat, the rising struggles of the workers and peasants and of the middle classes for political independence, for land and better life, and the urge of national bourgeoisie for full and independent industrialisation and for power, would no doubt pave the way for it. But what M. N. Roy and others saw in the imperialists' move and concession towards a measure of industrialisation was its stratagem to win the national bourgeoisie as a junior partner in the exploitation of Indian masses, under dominion status, and thus suppress the rising revolutionary struggle of the workers, peasants and revolutionary democrats for complete independence."

The first document (No 1) reproduced here is an extract from *The Communist International*—Between the Fifth

and the Sixth World Conference (1924-1928), later published as a pamphlet in July, 1928 by the Communist Party of Great Britain. This gives the necessary background in which the question of India, its economy, the position of its bourgeoisie vis-a-vis imperialism, as also the relative position of the various toiling masses and classes, and more particularly the rise of the workingclass movement in the late twenties. As we have already seen in Part I of III(C) —1928, comrade Adhikari had already opened this period by referring to this new upsurge of the workingclass movement in 1928.

Here are some salient points of Document I. It opens up: "The central feature of the new policy was the industrialisation of India under the control of British finance capital and with the cooperation (not on equal terms) of the Indian bourgeoisie for which last purpose political reforms were introduced, giving the latter a semblance of power." The work of the Industrial commission of 1916 and a protective tariff system, while laying the basis for some industrialisation, had to be modified because of the contradiction between the British monopoly capitalists and the Indian bourgeoisie, as also due to "the protracted crisis of British capitalism in the home country reaching its climax in the period immediately following the general strike..."

The document notes the corresponding change in the political situation in the period of four years since the fifth congress of the Communist International. "The essential basis of the political programme for which the bourgeoisie is fighting is nothing more than 'Dominion Status' for India within the British empire." The fight of the Indian bourgeoisie for an increased participation in capitalist economics has been chiefly a fight for a change in the character of imperialist control which practically dominates capitalist economy. It has not been a fight for the destruction of imperialist control itself. It has not been of a revolutionary character because of the fundamental contradiction involved in the nature of bourgeois opposition to imperialism. It is an opposition essentially on behalf of

a national capitalist development of the productive forces of India; it can succeed in its logical aim of destroying foreign control, which is blocking this development, only by the revolutionary intervention of social forces hostile to capitalism.

In this context "the bourgeois opposition to the Simon commission remains a strictly constitutional opposition, in spite of the 'left orientation' at the National congress of 1927."

We must also note the whole section (in this Document I) under the heading 'The Attempt to Control the Left'.

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Comrade Kuusinen, the main author of the *Colonial Thesis*, which we shall present at the end of this controversy, writes in the form of an article<sup>1</sup> in *Inprecor* dated 4 October 1928 (Document II) says inter alia:

"...the industrial development of India has progressed rapidly in the last twenty years. But if even several communist comrades have been induced on the strength of this fact to assume that British policy is following an entirely new course in regard to the industrial development in India, I must say that they have gone too far. A semblance of this was possible in the bccm years 1921-23. Actually no change has taken place in the British colonial policy. Some of these comrades went even to the length of holding out the prospects of a decolonisation of India by British imperialism. This was a dangerous term...." (Document II).

Comrade Kuusinen gives a full picture of the extent of British capital investment in India. There was a steady increase in the export of British capital to India from 1921-23 which started declining in 1927. But he also points out that most of it "was certainly not invested for productive purposes and by no means for industry. Of the whole amount (94,400,000 pound sterling) 70,000,000 pound ster-

1. This is really his report introducing the *Colonial Thesis*.

ling went to government loans." There was a considerable growth in foreign joint stock companies (mainly British) in India in the period between 1913-24, but most of these went not to industry but above all to banks, insurance and trading companies. (Out of 452 million pound sterling a sum of 405 million was thus invested.)

Indian capital started gaining ground in various spheres, particularly in jute and tea, where previously British capital predominated. Correspondingly, the British share in Indian imports started declining. The main cause of this is probably the development of the Indian industry itself, but on the other hand, there was considerable competition from Japan, the USA, Italy, Belgium and Germany. This was sought to be countered by raising the rupee ratio from 1s. 4d. to 1s. 6d. ie a premium of 12½ per cent for import.

In this context comrade Kuusinen raises the crucial question of the partnership between the British imperialists and the Indian bourgeoisie. Is a durable compromise between the two possible? He concludes that while parallel development of the two may be possible for some time, a clash cannot be avoided. This is because "the internal Indian market is not extending. It remains stationary and even a partial shrinkage of the internal market is noticeable".

"What constitutes the internal market in India? Mainly the rural districts. In this respect the peasantry is of decisive importance." Feudalism prevails throughout the rural areas and the purchasing power of the great majority of the Indian people depending on agriculture (in various capacities) is very low indeed.

Nothing short of agrarian revolution can solve this problem. Therefore there can be no talk of industrialisation and correspondingly of decolonisation. "The pauperisation of the peasantry, the retardation of the development of the native industry with the result that it cannot absorb the mass of the pauperised peasants, that peasants who migrated to the cities are returning to the villages—all

these are important and very characteristic facts in illustrating the development of India."

The national bourgeoisie is out for conducting bargaining tactics with imperialism. But one should not underestimate their hold over the masses in India, "not so much among the workers but among the petty-bourgeoisie and the peasantry. To undermine this influence, to overcome it, to get away the masses from the national reformists and the treacherous bourgeois opposition, such is our most important immediate task".

Comrade Kuusinen then brought out the importance of the role of the urban petty-bourgeoisie and intelligentsia. "...one cannot dispute the possibility that in this stage of the revolutionary movement in India not only the peasantry but also the urban petty-bourgeoisie, and to a considerable extent the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia can play an important role in the national movement.

"Above all the Indian proletariat will continue to develop. And if any of the Indian comrades have doubts as to the anti-industrialisation tendency of the British policy in India, I would like them to make their minds on this question once and for all."

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Comrade Sikander Sur submitted a co-report at the 31st session of the sixth congress on 15 August 1928. He took his stand clearly against the 'theory of decolonisation' as "very harmful to the colonial movement and especially to Indian revolutionary movement".

Comrade Sikander Sur refers to the development on a large scale of the Indian textile industry from 1913 to 1927, as also the building up seven times over of the iron and steel industry between 1914 and 1927. "It would be un-Marxian to say that there is no industrial development in India, but those industries are being developed which are profitable to Britain rather than to India. These industries are the hydro-electric and aviation industries, which constitute a market for the British-produced machinery and materials necessary for aviation and hydro-electric

work." He refers to the "national quasi-revolutionary movement" as "not a real movement because as soon as British imperialism comes to terms with them they readily make a compromise" and betray the movement. He ends by referring to the growing proletarian and other mass movements in India.

Comrade Sikander Sur in his concluding speech<sup>2</sup> reiterates his strong opposition to the theory of decolonisation as "a mechanical application and distortion of Marxian theory in the colonial countries". He points out in his conclusion that "the protagonists of industrialisation are confusing investment with industrialisation... The general capitalist development in India has brought into existence the native bourgeois class". The war situation helped the Indian capitalist class. "But when Britain was no longer interested in having her factories turned into war factories and when she once more began peacetime productions, then the break-up of Indian industries commenced... The imperialist slogan is, unity with the landlords and feudal elements, split between the upper and lower bourgeoisie, a definite check to the development of key industries and a break to the political aspirations of the bourgeoisie. This is the driving force of the bourgeois opposition and of the outburst of protest against the Simon commission." He expresses his strong opinion against the formation of workers and peasants parties and urges the formation of a strong Communist Party.

Comrade Clemens Dutt in his article entitled "India's Part in World Revolution" in *Communist International* dated 15 July 1928 (Document III) also takes the position against decolonisation theory.

He says: "...in spite of the shocks occasioned by the war and post-war crises, British imperialism has been successful in maintaining all key positions of control in its hands. There has been no decolonisation of India. India

2. *Inprecor*, Vol 8, No 78, dated 8 November 1928.

remains a classic example of a colonial country exploited to the full by foreign imperialism. Especially the monopolist hold over currency, banking and finance generally and over foreign trade, with predominance in industrial production and the direction of internal trade, serve to secure the position registered politically in subordination to the British parliament and control from the India Office in London." But comrade Clemens Dutt does not deny that due to the slump following the post-war boom and the immature Indian industries facing intense foreign competition, there has been "a modification of the policy of promoting industrialisation with concessions to the Indian bourgeoisie". The raising of the rupee ratio from one shilling four pence to six pence hit the Indian industrial interest and "brought about deflation crisis comparable to that occurring in England". The conflict between the British monopolists and Indian national capitalists can also be seen in relation to the tariff question. "The Indian demand for protection for the glass and chemical industries, largely in Indian hands, has not even received the consideration of the Tariff board." At the same time a special amendment of the Steel Protection act was hastily passed last March, which goes against the interests of Indian capitalists. "This policy of promoting only such industries that are securely in British hands, or essential for war needs, and in any case acting so as not to damage British capitalist interests, became marked on the introduction of preferential duty for British steel in March 1927." For all these "there has undoubtedly been a check in the process of industrialisation... The heavy drops in British capital exports to India, even as a proportion of the total capital exports indicates that British capitalists are deliberately refraining from making investments in India... The deflation crisis is accompanied by severe industrial depression. The Indian bourgeoisie is bitterly antagonistic to the present financial policy."

Comrade Clemens Dutt also notes the opposite picture. He says: "It is, however, not necessary to conclude that the policy of industrialisation has been abandoned... It is"



necessary to look beyond the present deflation crisis to the period when, as an England after deflation, on the new financial basis there will be a renewed outburst of capitalist activity and a renewed impetus to the British investment in India and the development of nominally Indian industries."

In this context the role played by the Indian bourgeoisie in the new rising upsurge of the national movement in 1928 is discussed. Comrade Clemens Dutt stresses the basically contradictory character of the Indian national bourgeoisie, its vacillating role vis-a-vis imperialism on the one hand and the rising mass movement on the other. "The whole experience of the action of the Indian bourgeoisie and of their counterparts in China goes to show that their opposition to the working class is more fundamental than their opposition to foreign imperialism."

He no doubt draws the distinction between China and India. "The complete domination by one imperialist power to the exclusion of the other, the single centralised government, the different social institutions such as the caste system, the part played by the different races, particularly hindu and mohamedans, all these things distinguish the Indian problem from that of China. In certain wide outstanding features, nevertheless, the national colonial revolution in India presents the same problem as in China and the development and experience of the one plays its part in affecting the development and experience of the other... The Indian revolution develops as part of the world proletarian revolution and is profoundly influenced by the general world situation."

Comrade G. A. K. Luhani in his article in *Communist International* dated 15 January and 1 February 1928 (Document IV) notes the two factors of change operating simultaneously in relation to British imperialism and her colony, India, viz. "the decline of capitalism in England and the development of capitalism in India". The capitalist decline in England is a process induced, first, by

organic defects and accelerated, secondly by external factors among which the capitalist development of India plays till now a very minor role. On the other hand, capitalism in India, once started as a historical process in the evolution of productive forces, finds in the simultaneous process of capitalist decline in England at once a stimulus and a terrain for further development.

“It is to be noted that the processes in England and India are parallel and counteracting. The result of their parallelism and counter-action is a third and distinct process, viz. the relative decolonisation of India. It is a new and startling phenomenon in the history of colonial countries.”

Comrade Luhani goes on to record “the three phases” in the present imperialist phase of British economy. “First, the export of finance capital from England is becoming increasingly precarious, because of the instability of its source. The export of British finance capital to India does not now proceed from the surplus of a prosperous capitalist system at home. The British capitalist system organically affected in the basic industries, is hemmed in by powerful competition from Continental and American sources...

“Secondly, an increasing part of British capital invested in India is not exported from England. It is local capital accumulated by British firms operating in India and invested by them—in denominations, not of British but Indian currency—in Indian enterprises. The gestation of this capital has given birth to a local British bourgeoisie domiciled in India for commercial purposes, putting itself sometimes in opposition to finance capital of the metropolis and feeling in some cases a certain community of interests... with the Indian bourgeoisie.

“Thirdly, we have to note the most important fact of the rise of a powerful native capitalist class in India and its determined and sustained attempt to secure an ever bigger partnership with exported British finance capital in the capitalist development of the productive forces of India.”

After quoting a lot of relevant figures of the respective positions of the British and Indian capital in the contemporary period to prove his points above, comrade Luhani goes to the political aspect, the relative character of 'decolonisation'. "The term is a misnomer, if it is taken to signify more than it is meant to signify... It does not certainly signify a permanent liquidation of the contradiction of interests between British imperialism and the social classes compromising the Indian population. Most emphatically, it does not signify the exclusion of India from the area of Asiatic revolution against imperialism. On the contrary, it signifies an enormous intensification of the exploitation of the proletarian masses of India in the latest capitalist forms in the big urban centres, and the expropriation of vast peasant masses in the 'hinterland'; because of the imperative needs of advancing capitalism are a reserve of huge, cheap and mobile labour power and vast increased productivity of the soil through a system of modern agriculture which in its capitalist development can be erected only on the debris of the present peasant economy. Consequently, 'decolonisation' signifies a profound disturbance of the social basis of the existing overwhelmingly vast majority of the 320 millions of the Indian population, and a tremendous concentration of revolutionary forces released by the colossal pressure of double exploitation of a desperate imperialism and an advancing native capitalism...

"The political consequences of the 'decolonising' process thus resolves themselves into (a) the 'decolonisation' of a considerable section of the bourgeoisie and its withdrawal to the other side of the barricade; and (b) the transfer of the hegemony of the national revolutionary struggle to the proletariat and the oppressed peasantry...

"The process of 'decolonisation' naturally introduces a change in the character of the political issue before the national movement in India, so far as the various social classes are concerned...

"There are bourgeois elements who have not made up their mind as to whether they are for or against British

imperialism. But the upper bourgeoisie has, however, definitely gone over to the side of British imperialism...

"A reformist bourgeoisie seeking an alliance with imperialism on the basis of class interest is bound to play an objectively counter-revolutionary role in the development of the national-revolutionary struggle under the stress of the action of the exploited masses. It is evident that the upper strata of the bourgeoisie are prepared to play such a role..."

"As against this sinister tendency of the bourgeoisie... to rush headlong to counter-revolution, we have, within the official national movement the lower middle class, the petty-bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia who are seeing their economic situation worsening in the wake of the Congress policy of more open compromise with British capitalist interests. They form the vast majority of the rank and file of the Congress. Their discontent with the Congress leadership has driven them to form a left wing. Within the Congress they are the partisans of the policy of 'complete independence'..."

Comrade Luhani concludes by referring to the growing workers and peasants struggles and movements, refers particularly to the revolution of the Bombay Workers and Peasants Party to change the policy of the Indian National Congress and give it the character of a revolutionary mass organisation. In the end he quotes from the programme of action of "a Communist Party of India" which "has come into legal existence". "This party calls upon the communists to cooperate with the radical nationalists there, to formulate a common programme on the lines of the following minimum programme laid down by the party." It demands:

- (a) Complete national independence and the establishment of a democratic republic based on universal adult suffrage;
- (b) abolition of landlordism;
- (c) reduction of land, rent and indirect taxation, higher incidence of graduated income tax;
- (d) moderation of agriculture with state aid;
- (e) nationalisation of public utilities, industrialisation of

the country with state aid; (f) eight-hour day and minimum wage.

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Comrade Raza takes his stand against the 'decolonisation' theory and supports comrade Kuusinen.

Comrade Narayan<sup>3</sup> disagrees with the statement in the 'Colonial Theses that "the real industrialisation of the colonial countries, especially the building of efficient machine industries, which might make for the independent development of the productive forces of the country, are not fostered by imperialist monopoly, but are retarded".

Comrade Narayan points out that a certain amount of industrialisation has taken place due to the (a) needs of supplying war materials; (b) the position of the British monopoly of the Indian market has been threatened by Japan and America; and that (c) the industrialisation of India creates a market for British engineering and metallurgical industries.

"What is the political expression of this policy", asks comrade Narayan. "It means that in order to industrialise India, it is necessary to extend the internal market, to make certain agrarian reforms which it is impossible for British imperialism to achieve in India owing to the very complicated land tenure system in India.

"This industrialisation leads to pauperisation of the peasantry which involves the possibility of an agrarian revolution; industrialisation gives rise to the development of the proletariat which brings with it the possibility of *socialist revolution* (emphasis mine); industrialisation causes a change in the attitude of the national bourgeoisie—all these are the political causes which give rise to the change of England's economic policy towards India." "So long as imperialism was obstructing the capitalist development in India, the Indian bourgeoisie was a driving

3. *Inprecor*, dated 30 October 1928.

force ... We find that to the same degree as the hindrance in the way of the capitalist development of India has been removed by British imperialism, the bourgeoisie is sliding more and more towards cooperation and one group after the other is capitulating to imperialism. The Indian bourgeoisie never in its history adopted a revolutionary attitude towards British imperialism..."

It is evident that comrade Narayan adopts an extreme left sectarian position when he talks in terms of the socialist revolution in India.

As regards the role of the Workers and Peasants Party in India, comrade Narayan strikes a slightly different note. He does not raise the feasibility or otherwise of a two-class party concept, the main point of criticism in Comintern's position, as we will see later (in its agit-prop-thesis). He says:

"It seems to me that some of the comrades are scared with the nightmare which is the result of their own irrational fantasy that the Workers and Peasants Party is a substitute of the Communist Party. Nobody has ever put forward" that suggestion.

But according to comrade Narayan, the Workers and Peasants Party can be a bridge to gain access to the radicalised petty-bourgeois masses, the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia and the urban petty-bourgeoisie... "the Communist Party should utilise the revolutionary energies of the petty-bourgeoisie. I think that it is clear that this anti-imperialist front can only take the organisation of a workers and peasants party composed of the urban intelligentsia and the petty-bourgeois elements under the leadership of the proletariat... I think it is quite clear that, under the leadership of the Communist Party of India, the workers and peasants parties are a valuable help for the propagation of communist ideas in India. There has been no other revolutionary orientation in Indian national movement before the Workers and Peasants Party appeared in the field. And today all the left elements in the country are

orientating towards these organisations and a certain crystallisation of the left forces has been taking place through these workers and peasants parties.”

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Comrade Bukharin in a short rejoinder<sup>4</sup>—he was the main rapporteur of the programme which was adopted at the sixth congress—sought to refute the charge against him that he had made no reference to the ‘decolonisation’ of India in the sense that he had made no reference to the industrialisation of India in his report. He says: “I may not have employed the term industrialisation. But I spoke of big capital investments during the war and post-war periods; is that not industrialisation?” But the decisive element, in his opinion, is the “policy of British imperialism”. The “flow of capital (ie of British monopoly finance-capital—ed.) has been greatly diminished of late... Hence the improvement and pauperisation now in progress which is converting the peasants not into urban workers on all sides, but semi-beggars on the land, robbed and enslaved on all sides. This retards the development of the home market and therefore the development of industry which has to contend against bitter competition, which is made all the more severe by the ‘preferences’.”

Comrade Lozovsky in a speech<sup>5</sup> refers to the theses that “the Swarajists have not yet betrayed the national-liberation struggle as has been done in China by the Kuomintang”, and poses the counter-question in refutation to this: “What makes it necessary to wait with our struggle against the Indian bourgeoisie till it turns traitor like the Kuomintang, ie till it begins to hang and shoot thousands and tens of thousands of workers and peasants?” (We must record the falseness of this analogy in so far as the Indian bourgeoisie were not enjoying even any rudiments of state power to be able to shoot down workers and peasants in the year 1928—ed.)

4. *Inprecor*, Vol 8, No 49, dated 15 August 1928.

5. *Inprecor*, Vol 8, No 76, dated 30 October 1928.

Comrade Lozovsky points out the difference in the correlation in class forces between that of India and China. "We have in India a national bourgeoisie which is always ready for compromise with the British bourgeoisie against the toiling masses. Therefore in India our main task is establishment of independent labour organisations. It is essential to create, organise and educate politically an independent labour movement, independent trade unions, a base for the labour movement. This central idea gets lost in the discussions 'about the chief firing line' and about the possibility of supporting the Swarajist bourgeoisie under certain circumstances. I think that this is politically incorrect." He ends with a call for building up the Communist Party and the trade unions.

Comrade Kuusinen in his concluding speech on the 'Colonial report,'<sup>6</sup> (Document V) does not deny that "in such great colonial countries as India, the industrial development forges ahead, even if it proceeds with very great difficulty, and at a very retarded pace... this development makes headway despite everything, the deepening of the revolutionary contradiction between imperialist England and India".

Comrade Luhani in a second interjection on the same day made his position amply clear by quoting from his declaration at the congress the previous day that he has "nothing whatever to do with the so-called decolonisation of India theory". He wanted to emphasise that his use of the term "was provisional and wanted to repudiate entirely the interpretation which comrade Kuusinen has given to our use of the term".

He reiterated that "the class struggle is developing in India; that Indian bourgeoisie is a potential, if not already, an actual, counter-revolutionary force; and that in the national revolutionary struggle against imperialism, the

6. *Inprecor*, Vol 8, No 81, dated 21 November 1928.



decisive and leading role is in the process of being transferred to the proletariat standing at the head of the radical petty-bourgeoisie and the peasant masses”.

A big controversy also took place at this time between comrades Eugen Varga, the noted Hungarian economist of the Comintern staff and Rajani Palme Dutt. We are reproducing here both the documents in abridged form but bringing out the main points under discussion here (Nos VI and VII).

We are noting here only some of the main points of controversy.

Comrade Varga sums up his study of the Indian economic situation thus (Document VI):<sup>7</sup>

“...The development of the big industries in India has in the last few decades moved fairly fast though by no means faster than in China or Japan. It has progressed at the expense of the old handicrafts and domestic industries, which still offer considerable resistance. It is only the cotton industry that has really developed vigorously. Metals and chemicals are making rapid progress, but the degree of development attained is still quite low. So far industrialisation has changed nothing in the fundamental character of India as a pronouncedly agrarian country.” Comrade Varga brings out the vacillating role of the Indian bourgeoisie in the national anti-imperialist struggle and concludes: “It is only when the empire is finally in a pronounced state of decay that the Indian bourgeoisie will attempt once more to place itself at the head of the national-revolutionary movement, so as to preserve its hegemony in independent India too. The task of leading the national-revolutionary fight falls to the lot of the Indian proletariat. It is only a victorious revolution on the part of the workers and peasants that can put an end to all

7. Published in *Inprecor*, dated 14 March 1928.

remnants of the pre-capitalist period, such as slavery and serfdom and at the same time to all the misery and want resulting from the rule of British capital."

Comrade Rajani Palme Dutt in his Notes of the Month in *Labour Monthly* of June, 1928, raised a controversy (Document VII). We give here only the main points:

"The policy of imperialism in India has undergone some modification in the past few years. The rapid progressive policy which marked the end of the war and the first post-war period, the policy of economic transformation and industrialisation combined with liberal constitutional forms has met with an arrest and slowed down very considerably." While there is no dispute as to the extent of industrialisation although the *rate* of industrialisation has been extremely rapid during the past fifteen years nevertheless the absolute degree of industrialisation is still very low. Comrade Dutt suggests that "the first and most general reason is not peculiar to India or the Indian situation, but lies in the cessation of the post-war boom, and the reaction after the feverish speculation of the first years following the war. This general factor is common to the wider world depression, but is complicated and intensified in India by special conditions closely bound up with British policy". The policy is, according to Dutt, to secure industrialisation under British control. "In general the peculiar character of the problem of British capitalist industrialisation in India consists in this, that the proportion of Indian capital inevitably increases as industrial development goes forward, while the actual British supplies of fresh capital are for home reasons growing more restricted, but that at the same time it is the aim of British capitalism to maintain control of the new industrial area in India and reap the richest profits for itself by use of its dominant position, banking monopoly, shipping and trading monopoly, international connections and machinery of state power... But this is no ground for drawing from the present situation a conclusion of the abandonment of industrialisation or reversion to the pre-war period, with the consequent political corollary which this would mean of abandoning our

central political prospective for India based on the certainty of the growth of the industrial proletariat." From this comrade Dutt derives the general political conclusion as to the role of the Indian national bourgeoisie since the collapse of the non-cooperation movement as "of becoming more and more clearly counterrevolutionary". "But at the same time, within this general framework of capitulation, there takes place a process of friction and antagonism which has recently grown sharper. This has shown itself most clearly in the resistance to the Simon commission, which at the outset, before the process of bargaining and capitulation has begun, has united even the liberals or big bourgeois elements in a single national front." Comrade Dutt notes that the adoption of the slogan of complete independence at the Madras session of the National Congress is "a landmark in the history of the national movement" but "*the demand for independence needs to be combined with the demand for the repudiation of the foreign debts and expropriation of the foreign concessions and capital holdings in India.*" (emphasised by the author)

The *Colonial Thesis*<sup>8</sup> opens with an analysis of the changes in the international situation. It begins:

"The sixth congress of the Comintern declares that the 'Theses on the National and Colonial Question' drawn up by Lenin and developed at the second congress are still valid, and should serve as a guiding line for the further work of the communist parties. Since the time of the second congress, the actual significance of the colonies and semi-colonies as factors of crisis in the imperialist world system has vastly increased."

It draws attention in this connection particularly to the strengthening of the elements of capitalists and of industrial development, the intensification of the agrarian crisis,

8. We are giving relevant extracts here. The original is easily available.

the growth of the proletariat and the beginning of its organisation, the pauperisation of the mass of the peasantry etc. It also draws attention to the changed position in the respective balance of forces between the world of imperialism and the world of socialism.

“In India the policy of British imperialism, which used to retard the development of native industry, evoked great dissatisfaction among the Indian bourgeoisie. The class consolidation of the latter which replaced its former division into religious sects and castes, and which was expressed in the fusion of the Indian National Congress (organ of the bourgeoisie) with the Muslim League effected in 1916, confronted British imperialists with a national united front in the country. Fear of the revolutionary movement during the war compelled British imperialism to make concessions to the native bourgeoisie which found expression in the economic sphere, in insignificant parliamentary reforms introduced in 1919.” Referring to the first non-cooperation movement of 1919-22 as “the first great anti-imperialist movement in India” and which “ended in the betrayal of the cause of the national revolution by the Indian bourgeoisie”, it points out that “the real threat to British domination comes, not from the bourgeois camp, but from the growing mass movement of the Indian workers, which is developing in the form of largescale strikes; at the same time the accentuation of the crisis in the village bears witness to the maturing of an agrarian revolution. All these phenomena are leading to a radical transformation of the whole political situation in India.”

“The objective contradiction between the colonial policy of world imperialism and the independent development of the colonial peoples is by no means done away with, neither in China nor in India nor in any other of the colonial and semi-colonial countries; on the contrary, the contradiction only becomes more acute and can be overcome only by the victorious revolutionary struggle of the toiling masses in the colonies... the alliance with the USSR and with the revolutionary proletariat of the imperialist countries creates for the toiling masses of the people of

China, India and all other colonial and semi-colonial countries, the possibility of an independent free, economic and cultural development, *avoiding the stage of the domination of the capitalist system* or even the development of capitalist relations in general.” (emphasis in the original)

“With the object of buying up definite strata of the bourgeoisie in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, especially in periods of a rising revolutionary movement, the metropolis may, to a certain extent, weaken its economic pressure. But, in the measure that **these** extraordinary and, for the most part, extra-economic circumstances lose their influence, the economic policy of the imperialist powers is immediately directed towards repressing and retarding the economic development of the colonies. Consequently, the development of the national economy of the colonies, and especially their industrialisation, the allround development of their industry, can **only** be realised in the strongest contradiction to the policy of imperialism...

“On the other hand, the **imminent** objective contradictions in the capitalist development of the colonies become strengthened, which itself deepens the contradiction between the independent development of the colonies and the interests of the bourgeoisie of the imperialist states; on the other hand, the new capitalist forms of exploitation bring into the arena a genuine revolutionary force—the proletariat, round which the many millions of the peasant masses rally more and more strongly in order to offer organised resistance to the yoke of finance capital.

“*All the chatter of the imperialists and their lackeys about the policy of decolonisation being carried through by the imperialist powers, about cooperation in ‘free development of the colonies’ reveals itself as nothing but an imperialist lie.* It is of the utmost importance that communists, both in the imperialist and in the colonial countries, should completely expose this lie.” (emphasis mine)

What is the attitude of the national bourgeoisie towards imperialism? ‘Colonial Thesis’ points out that they “do not adopt a uniform attitude in relation to imperialism”. There

are the trading or comprador bourgeoisie who "directly serve the interests of imperialist capital". But "the remaining portions of the native bourgeoisie, especially the portions reflecting the interests of native industry, support the national movement and represent a special *vacillating compromising* tendency which may be designated as NATIONAL REFORMISM". It is not to be observed any longer in China, but "in India and Egypt we still observe, for the time being, the typical bourgeois-nationalist movement—an opportunist movement" subject to great vacillations, balancing between imperialism and revolution". (emphasis mine, all small caps in the original)

The Colonial Thesis develops this vacillating compromising character of the native bourgeoisie but "its capitulation (to imperialism—ed.), however, is not final as long as the danger of class revolution on the part of the masses has not become immediate, acute and menacing".

Regarding the correct tactics to be pursued by the communists "to help the toiling masses in India, Egypt, Indonesia and such colonies to emancipate themselves from the influence of the bourgeois parties, it is necessary to reject the formation of any kind of bloc between the Communist Party and the national reformist opposition. This does not exclude the formation of temporary agreements and the coordinating of separate activities in connection with definite anti-imperialist demonstrations, provided that these demonstrations of the bourgeois opposition can be utilised for the development of the mass movement, and provided that these agreements do not in any way limit the communist parties in the matter of agitation among the masses and among the organisations of the latter."

Further "it is absolutely essential that the communist parties in these countries should from the very beginning DEMARCATÉ THEMSELVES IN THE MOST CLEAR-CUT FASHION, both politically and organisationally, from all the petty-bourgeois groups and parties. In so far as the needs of the revolutionary struggle demand it, a temporary coopera-

tion is permissible, and in certain circumstances, even a temporary union between the communist party and the national-revolutionary movement, provided that the latter is a genuinely revolutionary movement, that it genuinely struggles against the ruling power and that its representatives do not put obstacles in the way of the communists, educating and organising in a revolutionary sense the peasants and wide masses of the exploited."

The Colonial Thesis makes it quite clear that it is against "special workers and peasants parties, whatever revolutionary character they may possess, because they can too easily at particular periods be converted into ordinary petty-bourgeois parties and accordingly communists are not recommended to organise such Parties"... "The basic tasks of the Indian communists consist in struggle against British imperialism for the emancipation of the country, for destruction of all relics of feudalism, for the agrarian revolution and for establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry in the form of a Soviet Republic. These tasks can be successfully carried out only when there will be created a powerful communist party, which will be able to place itself at the head of the wide masses of the working class, peasantry and all the toilers, and to lead them in the struggle against the feudal-imperialist bloc... The union of all communist groups and individual communists scattered throughout the country into a single independent and centralised party represents the first task of Indian communists." (emphasis mine)

We have quoted at length from the Colonial Thesis to show that while it did not accept the 'decolonisation' thesis, it was also against what later came to be known as the policy of the people's united front against imperialism adopted after the seventh congress of the Comintern. While it did give a fervent call to build up the communist party by uniting all scattered communist groups in the country on the basis of a firm anti-imperialist, anti-feudal policy, it also talked of the 'establishment' of the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry in the form of a

Soviet republic. And on the crucial question of the role of the national bourgeoisie, it suggests a temporary agreement with national reformist bourgeoisie.

Comrade M. N. Roy produced his Draft Resolution on the Indian Situation dated 24 March 1928 (Document VIII), which was not published.\* He was asked to do this on his return from China and before the sixth congress of the Comintern took place in July 1928. As is known, he was very ill and being treated in Berlin and so he was not present at the sixth congress.

Comrade M. N. Roy writes in this Draft Resolution (Document VIII) to say that by a policy of 'decolonisation' is suggested that imperialist finance capital by helping to industrialise, even if partially a colony like India, helps to create a market for the British metallurgical and engineering trades. Development of the productive forces will raise the purchasing power of India. Direct exploitation of Indian labour in more productive forms will increase the total amount of surplus value produced. Granting the native bourgeoisie the share, imperialism will derive greater profit than ever. The capitalist accumulation in India, which will be very rapid and large, owing to the superfluity and cheapness of labour power, will more than compensate for the decline of accumulation in England. Industrialisation of India will thus strengthen the position of imperialism and will be a factor contributing to the stabilisation of capitalism, provided that it takes place within the framework of the British empire.

"...The implication of the new policy is a gradual 'decolonisation' of India, which will be allowed to evolve out of the state of 'dependency' to 'dominion status'. The Indian bourgeoisie instead of being kept down as a potential rival will be granted partnership in the economic development of the country under the hegemony of imperialism. From a backward agricultural colonial possession India will become a modern industrial country—a 'member of the

\*First handwritten date 20 May 1927 then copied 24 March 1928.



British Commonwealth of free nations'. *India is in a process of 'decolonisation' in so far as the policy forced upon British imperialism by the post-war crisis of capitalism abolishes the old, antiquated forms and methods of colonial exploitation in favour of new forms and new methods.*" (emphasis mine)

From this comrade Roy derives the conclusion:

"So long as imperialist domination was based upon the policy of obstructing the capitalist development of the country, the native bourgeoisie was the driving force of the national movement. But the new change in the policy of imperialism causes a corresponding change in the role of the native bourgeoisie."

What he seeks to argue here is that "the process of the gradual 'decolonisation' of India is produced by two different factors, viz. (a) post-war crisis of capitalism, and (b) the revolutionary awakening of the Indian masses".

From which it may seem to appear that this alleged partnership between imperialism and Indian bourgeoisie arises of the intensification of the class struggle waged by the workers, peasants and other toiling sections of the population which help to throw the bourgeoisie, as it were, into the arms of imperialism. But the emphasis is not on this aspect of the mass and class struggle. "In order to stabilise its economic basis and strengthen its position in India, British imperialism is obliged to adopt a policy which cannot be put into practice without making certain concessions to the Indian bourgeoisie. These concessions are not conquered by the Indian nationalist bourgeoisie. *They are gifts (reluctant but obligatory) of imperialism. Therefore, the process of 'decolonisation' is parallel to the process of 'derevolutionisation' of the Indian bourgeoisie.*" (emphasis mine)

Comrade Roy in his analysis of the compromising character of the Indian bourgeoisie points out that this is so because they are linked with feudal economy. And further that "the British conquest of India had essentially the significance of bourgeois revolution (Marx). Now the un-

accomplished part of the bourgeois revolution takes place in India also under the protection of British imperialism but in this period of capitalist decline its significance is counter-revolutionary”.

What is attributed to Marx here as the bourgeois revolution taking place in India under the aegis of the British advanced capitalist order is not factually correct.

We can quote here a little relevant extracts from Marx's writings on India. Marx wrote in 1853 and later:

“Arabs, Turks, Moguls, who had successively overrun India, soon became *Hinduised*, the barbarian conquerors being, by an eternal law of history, conquered themselves by the superior civilisation of their subjects. The British were the FIRST CONQUERORS superior, and, therefore, inaccessible to hindu civilisation. THEY DESTROYED IT by breaking the native communities, by uprooting the native industry, and by levelling all that was great and elevated in the native society. THE HISTORIC PAGES OF THEIR RULE IN INDIA REPORT HARDLY ANYTHING BEYOND THAT DESTRUCTION. The work of regeneration hardly transpires through a heap of ruins. Nevertheless it has begun.”<sup>9</sup>

Marx was ruthless in his condemnation of the ruinous forms of this ‘destructive’ role in the colonies.

“The profound hypocrisy and inherent barbarism of bourgeois civilisation lies unveiled before our eyes, turning from its home, where it assumes respectable forms, to the colonies, where it goes naked.”<sup>10</sup>

Marx therefore emphasises only the objective effects of British conquest of India, leading to the destruction of those self-sufficient village communities, which will lead to the growth of, ‘the regeneration’ (ie bringing India into the vortex of bourgeois economy) of Indian society. Therefore his final-judgement on this question remains a classic

9. *The First War of Independence*, Marx and Engels, Progress Publishers, 1975, p 30.

10. *Ibid*, p 34.

statement which does not allow for any distortion. He said:

“England, it is true, in causing a social revolution in Hindusthan, was actuated only by the vilest interests, and was stupid in her manner of enforcing them. But that is not the question. The question is, can mankind fulfill its destiny without a fundamental revolution in the social state of Asia? If not, whatever may have been the crimes of England she was the unconscious tool of history in bringing about that revolution.”<sup>11</sup>

It is clear that here Marx is basically concerned with the future of the world revolutionary process (what he calls ‘the destiny of mankind’) which cannot be confined to a part of the world. And in that context his primary interest in studying India was to study the conditions of a classical type of colonial economy subjected to the most advanced but brutal capitalist exploitation. In other words, the focus of his study is basically Britain, its capitalist economy and its manifestation as a colonial exploiter.

It will be wrong therefore to conclude from this as comrade Roy does here that “the unaccomplished part of the bourgeois revolution takes place in India also under the protection of British imperialism” even when its significance according to him, “in this period of capitalist decline” “is counter-revolutionary”.

From this ultra-rightist position of M. N. Roy emerges the ultra-left stand, viz. that “the movement for national freedom, as the political expression of these oppressed and exploited classes (constituting the overwhelming majority of the population) becomes a revolutionary struggle not only against imperialism, but also against its native allies, capitalist and landowning classes. *Class struggle coincides with national struggle. The anti-imperialist struggle will develop and triumph as an anti-capitalist struggle.*” (emphasis mine)

11. Ibid, pp 18-19.

A neat scheme is presented here whereby “the immediate task of the national revolution still remains to overthrow imperialist rule and establish in its place a national democratic state”. This ‘national democratic’ state of M. N. Roy by no means is to be confused with that of the CPI’s formulation in the programme today. The basic difference between the two may be noted.

The Communist Party of India’s conception of national democratic state today after attainment of national independent state is based on an alliance of four classes, which are: “*first* and foremost, the working class, which stands for the complete and consistent carrying out of this programme.” (ie, that of national democracy—ed.)

“Second, the broad masses of the cultivating peasants, including the rich peasants and the agricultural labourers. *Third*, the rising class of urban and rural intelligentsia” (what is broadly called otherwise as the middle classes—ed.) and “*finally*, the national bourgeoisie, excluding its monopoly section, which is objectively interested in the accomplishment of the principal tasks of the anti-imperialist antifeudal revolution...”

The CPI programme further makes it clear that “in this class alliance, the exclusive leadership of the working class is not yet established, though the exclusive leadership of the bourgeoisie no longer exists. The leadership of this alliance belongs to firm anti-imperialist, antifeudal, anti-monopoly forces”. Also and what is of crucial importance to note is that “as the government of national-democratic front and the class alliance it represents will be based on the worker-peasant alliance as its pivot, the working class will increasingly come to occupy the leading position in the alliance, as it is this class which is the conscious initiator and builder of the national democratic front”.<sup>12</sup>

It is evident that there is a fundamental difference between this CPI’s conception of ‘national-democratic’ state

12. Programme of the CPI adopted at the Eighth Congress in 1968.

whose main task is anti-imperialist and antifeudal and that of M. N. Roy's which is based on a three-class alliance of workers, peasants and middle classes and under the leadership of the working class but where the whole bourgeoisie is looked upon as an enemy class. In other words, M. N. Roy's conception of 'national-democratic' state is far to the left of CPI's and verges on the socialist phase of the revolution.

It is easy for M. N. Roy to derive from this ultra-left position the need for a "National Revolutionary Party" representing those classes to lead the national revolution. It will not be "a party only of the workers and peasants. The petty-bourgeois masses (as distinct from the consciously reactionary intelligentsia) must participate in the struggle for national freedom." He then goes on to describe the relationship between the Communist Party of the working class and the national revolutionary party with particular reference to the Workers and Peasants Party then emerging in India.

Many commentators have found this ultra-left and ultra-right position of M. N. Roy rather intriguing. It should present no difficulty as we know how very often a ultra-right position coincides with an ultra-left one or vice-versa.

The Theses of the Agit-Prop. of the ECCI on the Sixth World Congress of the Comintern, which we are reproducing here in full (Document IX and so far not available elsewhere) is of enormous significance judged in the context of the contemporary times.

We will confine ourselves to the colonial question dealt here. It says inter alia: (section 28)

"In connection with the discussion upon this question number of comrades in their speeches criticised the assertion that India and other colonial countries constitute a 'world village', that the colonial countries constitute a sort of 'agrarian appendage' of the imperialist industrial countries."

The comrades who criticised this referred to the industrialisation that is going on in India and “the logical development of such assertions is to lead up to the theory of ‘decolonisation’. The document emphasises that this industrial development does not yet signify industrialisation. It then refers to the fact that a section of the Indian bourgeoisie—and the most influential one—has already taken to the path of compromise with British imperialism. It urges upon the need to form and build up the communist party (section 29).

Comrade M. N. Roy was expelled from the Comintern and there was a notification in the *International Press Correspondence*, as follows:

#### EXPULSION OF M. N. ROY FROM THE COMINTERN

“In accordance with the resolution of the 10 plenum of the ECCI (on the international situation and the tasks of the Communist International, Para 9) and the decision of the Presidium of the ECCI of 19 December 1928 according to which adherents of the Brandler organisation cannot be members of the Communist International, the Presidium of the ECCI declares that Roy, by contributing to the Brandler press and by supporting Brandler organisation has placed himself outside the ranks of the Communist International and is to be considered expelled from the Communist International.”<sup>13</sup>

It should be seen therefore that he was not expelled for holding to the view of ‘decolonisation’ theory.

But in a subsequent booklet entitled *My Crime*, M. N. Roy goes into great length on the question of ‘decolonisation’, because he maintains that “the fatherhood of which is the ostensible cause of the victimisation”. In further discussion on this point, he corroborates that he “was charged

13. From the *International Press Correspondence*, Vol 9, No 69, 13 December, 1929, p 1470.

to draft a resolution on the basis of the preparatory work accomplished by the commission." This is the Document VIII which we have given here in full.

Further he refers to a document written by him which he refers here in this *My Crime* booklet as follows:

"Not being present at the Congress, I could not defend my position and explain my point of view as it really is. Soon after the report and resolutions of the congress were published, I submitted to the Executive Committee of the CI (ie Communist International—ed.) a *comprehensive statement of my views*. The statement also contained the criticism of Kuusinen's report and disagreement with the tactical line laid down by the sixth congress on the basis of that report."

We believe that the document which he refers above, ie his comprehensive statement to the ECCI, is entitled 'On the Indian Question in the World Congress' by M. N. Roy (unfortunately undated) (This is on Document X here). Therein he says inter alia:

"But he (ie Kuusinen), who certainly extravagant in imagination, if he sought to accuse me of having ever maintained, openly or by implication, that imperialism under any circumstance could be a progressive factor in the colonies. Happily, in the corrected version of his concluding speech he emphatically stated that he did not identify 'this false theory' (of decolonisation) of our comrades with the 'apology of colonial regime made by the lackeys of imperialism'. In *My Crime* this is what M. N. Roy says at the very outset:

"... Kuusinen attacked me as the father of the so-called theory of 'decolonisation'. According to him, I had put forward the view that British imperialism would gradually lead the Indian people to freedom. On this allegation, I was characterised in the report as well as in the thesis (the tone was modified in the corrected stenogramme of the report and final version of the thesis) as lackey of imperialism."

It is obvious that the undated document entitled 'On the Indian Question in the Sixth Congress' is the one referred

to in his *My Crime*, when he says that he had submitted a statement to the ECCI "a comprehensive statement of my views".

We are therefore entitled to give some suitable quotations from this undated document also. This is what he says there *inter alia*:

"...I used the term 'decolonisation' (within inverted commas, because it is not my creation) in the sense that imperialist power is undermined in India creating conditions for its successful revolutionary overthrow. India is a colony of the classical type. She will never cease to be a colony until the British power is overthrown by revolutionary means. No compromise (however far-reaching) between the Indian bourgeoisie and the British imperialists will give real freedom to the Indian people. These are all truisms. But it is also true that India of today is not the India of a quarter of a century ago. It is simply ignoring facts to maintain that the Indian bourgeoisie is as economically suppressed and politically oppressed as twenty years ago. To recognise the fact that, simultaneously in spite of and with the sanction of imperialism, India now travels on a path of economic development closed to her previously, is not a violation of Marxist and Leninist conception of the nature of imperialism. On the contrary, such developments are not foreign to this nature..."

"The Indian bourgeoisie are not going to have their demand for 'equal partnership within the empire' (dominion status) satisfied in the immediate future. But they are on the verge of making another considerable advance in that direction. In spite of the exclusion of the Indians from its composition, and the sham opposition of a section of the Indian bourgeoisie, the Simon commission is sure to find that the political rights and power of the Indian bourgeoisie should be increased to that the smooth operation of the new economic policy of imperialism is assured. Since the appointment of the Simon commission, both the sides have gradually modified their respective attitudes, and at present only formalities and 'political face' stand in the way to agreement..."



“So, the immediate perspective of the present situation in India is the grant of further political rights to the bourgeoisie. Only in the light of this perspective, it becomes ‘inconceivable that the Indian bourgeoisie will play a revolutionary role for any length of time’. A gradual advance of the Indian bourgeoisie from the state of absolute colonial expression to self-government within the British empire is taking place. Therefore, it is not necessary for them to travel the risky path of revolution. In other words, progressive ‘decolonisation’ of their economic and political status makes the Indian bourgeoisie averse to revolution, and in the near future, when ‘decolonisation’ of their class has gone further, it will make them positively counter-revolutionary. Transfer of some political power to the colonial bourgeoisie does not weaken imperialism; because the native bourgeoisie wield this power, not to further develop the struggle against imperialism, but to suppress the revolutionary movement. This has been demonstrated by the experience in other colonial countries.

“‘Decolonisation’ of the Indian bourgeoisie, thus, is not an ‘illusion’. It is a fact which is the key to the situation. By estimating the situation in the light of this fact can we establish what comrade Kuusinen very correctly said in his report: *‘The mission of freeing India has been conferred by history on the Indian workers and peasants.’* The workers and peasant masses cannot be mobilised to undertake their historic mission consciously only on the slogan—‘the sahib is a robber’. They must know that the native bourgeoisie are the accomplices of the foreign sahib, and therefore, will never carry on a revolutionary fight for national liberation...

“Finally, I am completely in agreement with comrade Kuusinen’s opinion about the immediate tasks and organisational problems of the Communist Party of India. This agreement reveals the unreality of the row raised on the theory of ‘decolonisation’. A deep divergence in the appreciation of the situation must lead to equally great difference in determining our tasks in the given situation. The

conclusions drawn by comrade Kuusinen can be correct when the situations indicate a transformation in the relation between imperialism and the native bourgeoisie; in other words, when there is a process of 'decolonisation' as far as the bourgeoisie are concerned. Should comrade Kuusinen or any other comrade challenge the correctness of the analysis of the situation as given above, he could not logically draw the conclusions as regards our tasks, as he did. Looking at the matter dispassionately comrade Kuusinen will admit that I have not committed such a crime as he sought to depict in his report."

#### INDIAN DELEGATES AT THE SIXTH CONGRESS OF THE COMINTERN

The proceedings of the Congress are found in various issues of *Inprecor*. Volume VIII, No 39 of 25 July 1928 reported that Sikander Sur from India was included in the presidium as well as his speech greeting the congress No 44 of 3 August, 1928 gave another speech by Sikander Sur and one by Raza, both from India. In No 55 of 25 August 1928, the speech by Mahmud (India) is reported. Another speech by Sikander Sur and also by Raza were reported in No 61 dated 11 September 1928. Still another speech by Sikander and one by Narayan are given in No 66 of 25 September 1928. One of the main reports on "The Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semi-Colonies" by Otto Kuusinen is given in No 68 of 4 October 1928 along with two co-reports on the same subject; one by Ercoli and another by Sikander Sur. There were further speeches on the report, those by Narayan and Clemens Dutt (India)—these are given in No 76 of 30 October 1928. Speeches by Raza and Sikander are found in No 78 of 8 November 1928. At the conclusion of the debate on the colonial report there were declarations by Luhani and Sikander Sur which are printed in No 81 of 21 November 1928. The English translation of *The Theses on the Revolutionary Movement*

*in the Colonies and Semi-Colonies* was published in full in No 88 dated 12 December 1928.<sup>14</sup>

According to authentic information got recently from the Institute of Marxism-Leninism of the CC, CPSU, there were *three Indian delegates with Decisive Vote* and three others at the sixth congress. Their "names" have been listed as follows:

*With Decisive Vote*

1. Sikander Sur (Shaukat Usmani)
2. Raza (Mohammed Shafiq Siddiqi)
3. Spencer (Soumyendranath Tagore) also Narayan.

*Others*

1. Clemens Dutt
2. Mohammed Ali (Sepassi)

3. G. A. K. Luhani

## II

We deal in this portion with the Calcutta session of the National Congress in 1928. The dominant section of the national bourgeois leadership wanted to arrive at a compromise with the British imperialist administration by their demand for dominion status as formulated by the Nehru (Motilal) report. Against this the younger leaders of the National Congress—Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose formed the 'Independence for India League' with Srinivas Iyengar as president of the organisation and the former two as secretaries.

The 1927 Madras Congress had passed a resolution declaring "Complete national independence" as the goal of the Congress. Comrades K. N. Joglekar and R. S. Nimbkar, both accused in the Meerut conspiracy case later in 1929, were delegates and members of the AICC at this session. The resolution at the subjects committee was moved by K. N. Joglekar and supported by Jawaharlal Nehru

14. Later published in a pamphlet form, by "Modern Books Ltd.", in London, January 1929.

and was passed by overwhelming majority. It was passed in the open session, J. Nehru moving it and Joglekar supporting it. It must be noted that communists were tabling a resolution demanding complete independence since 1925, as pointed out by comrade G. Adhikari in his III (B) (1927) volume (p 119).

The original resolution as moved by J. Nehru at the subjects committee on 25 December 1927 was as follows:

“This Congress declares the goal of the Indian people to be independence with full control over the defence forces of the country, the financial and economic policy and the relations with foreign countries. The Congress demands that this right of the people of India should be forthwith recognised and given effect to, in particular by the complete withdrawal of the alien army of occupation.”

Later the above was shortened to just one line: “This Congress declares the goal of the Indian people to be complete National Independence.”<sup>15</sup>

On 28 December 1927, a Republican Congress was held at the Madras Congress pandal itself, B. Sambamurthi opening it and J. Nehru presiding.

Mahatma Gandhi did not approve of it. Within a week in a letter dated 4 January 1928, he wrote to J. Nehru from Sabarmati Ashram: “You are going too fast. You should have taken time to think and become acclimatised. (J. Nehru had come straight from Europe via Colombo to attend the Congress session—ed.)... Your plunging into the ‘republican army’ was a hasty step.”<sup>16</sup>

In a subsequent signed article in *Young India* dated 12 January 1928, he described the independence resolution at Madras as “hastily conceived and thoughtlessly passed”

He also wrote in another article entitled, ‘Independence vs. Swaraj’, where he suggested:

15. J. Nehru's *Selected Works*, Vol 3, pp 3 and 5.

16. Mahatma Gandhi, *Collected Works*, Vol 35, p 432.

"I submit that Swaraj is an all-satisfying goal for all time. We, the English-educated Indians often unconsciously make the terrible mistake of thinking that the microscopic minority of English-speaking Indians is the whole of India. I defy anyone to give for independence a common Indian word intelligible to the masses... And we have such a word as 'Swaraj' first used in the name of the nation by Dadabhai Naoroji."<sup>17</sup>

The editor of the *Collected Works* has, however, indicated in a footnote on p 456 that "Dadabhai Naoroji used the word 'Swaraj' as a synonym for 'self government'."

This counterposing of Swaraj in place of independence and 'complete independence' at that was also mentioned several times in his speeches at the Calcutta session of the National Congress, e.g. in his speech on 31 December 1928, moving for the adoption of the Nehru (Motilal) report at the open session. He had said then:

"If you wish India to be free you should stop all this controversy about dominion status and independence. You should remember that swaraj is what have outlined here (in this report)."<sup>18</sup>

Jawaharlal Nehru in his letter to Mahatma Gandhi dated 11 January 1928, protests against these characterisations of Gandhi of the Madras independence resolution. He also gave a public statement on 12 January 1928, and later again on 27 January explaining the 'Independence' Resolution.

The controversy raged through several letters between Gandhiji and J. Nehru which we are not submitting here.

#### NEHRU REPORT (MOTILAL) AND THE SIMON COMMISSION

It is necessary at this stage to deal at some length on the Simon commission vis-a-vis the Nehru (Motilal) report.

17. Ibid, pp 454 ff.

18. *Collected Works*, Vol 38, p 307.

The Statutory commission, popularly known as Simon commission after its leader, Sir John Simon, was constituted on 26 November 1927 "for the purpose of inquiring into the working of the system of government, the growth of education, and the development of representative institutions in British India..."

It had no Indian representative and all sections of Indian public opinion, not only the National Congress but more so the workers and peasants represented in their Workers and Peasants Party took an active part in staging boycott of the Simon commission. Clearly two trends were visible—the workers, peasants and petty-bourgeois sections wanted more militant actions; the elder leaders, while not accepting the Simon commission, were for moderate activities.

As a challenge to the Simon commission who defied the Indian public opinion to present a united opposition, and prepare an alternate draft for working of the government in India, an all-parties' committee with Motilal Nehru as chairman was agreed upon.

Comrade Adhikari has dealt with the Simon commission boycott in pages 99-104 of the 1927 Volume in brief outline only in relation to 1927. He has also discussed it further in the Part I of this Volume. We will have to deal a little more with it here in connection with the all-parties' conference and Nehru (Motilal) report. The Nehru report and its adoption by the Congress in Calcutta session was the main plank of discussion and controversy there, as we shall presently see.

The Madras session of the National Congress was followed by the Muslim League meeting in Calcutta and authorising its council to appoint a subcommittee "to confer with the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress and such other organisations as the Council may think proper for the purpose of drafting a constitution for India in which the interest of the muslim community will be safeguarded".

"In compliance with the directions contained in this resolution," says the Nehru report, "the Working Com-

mittee of the Congress issued invitations to a large number of organisations. Among these were:

National Liberation Federation, Hindu Maha Sabha, All India Muslim League, Central Khilafat Committee, Central Sikh League, South Indian Liberal Federation, All India Trade Union Congress, General Council of Burmese Associations, Home Rule League, Republican League, Independent Party in the assembly, Nationalist Party in the assembly, Indian States Subjects Association, Indian States Subjects Conference, Indian States Peoples' Conference, Anglo-Indian Association, Indian Association of Calcutta, Parsi Central Association, Zoroastrian Association, Parsi Rajkeya Sabha, Parsi Panchayat, All India Conference of Indian Christians, Southern India Chamber of Commerce, Dravida Mahajana Sabha and the Landholders' Association of Oudh, Agra, Bihar, Bengal and Madras. Subsequently at Bombay invitations were also issued to the Bombay Non-Brahmin Party, the Nationalist Non-Brahmin Party, the Communist Party of Bombay and the Bombay Workers and Peasants Party."<sup>19</sup>

The terms of reference of the Nehru report as mentioned are: "(1) that we are agreed that nothing short of dominion status will satisfy India and (2) that the form of government to be established in India will be the same and not lower than that of the other self-governing dominions..."<sup>20</sup>

Further, "there is no half way house between the present hybrid system and genuine responsible government... it is not a question of the colour of the administrative and governmental machinery as of the basic principle on which the future government shall be based. If all the members of the governor-general's executive council were Indians and if all the members of the bureaucracy in the provinces were Indians, it would only mean the substitution of a brown for a white bureaucracy. We use these expressions

19. See pp 20-21 of the (1975 reprinted) Nehru report.

20. Ibid, p 6.

in no offensive sense. The real problem, to our mind, consists in the transference of political power and responsibility *from the people of England to the people of India*". (Ibid, p 9, emphasis in the original)

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### THE CALCUTTA SESSION OF THE NATIONAL CONGRESS (1928)

The Calcutta session of the National Congress convened in the last few days of the year 1928 up to 31 December was therefore taking place in the context of the fight between the demand for dominion status as per Nehru report vs. the goal of 'complete National Independence' as per Madras Congress of 1927.

Mahatma Gandhi was brought out from his partial retirement from Congress politics after the formation of the Swaraj Party in 1924 and the council entries.

At the Calcutta session of the National Congress Gandhiji moved the first resolution on 26 December 1928 at the subjects committee and recommended the acceptance of the constitution (sometimes called the Swaraj constitution based on the Nehru report) while adhering to the Madras independence and resolution giving an ultimatum to the British government to accept it by 31 December 1930. It was also stipulated that a copy of the said resolution when passed should be sent to the viceroy. The British government failing to accept this national demand non-violent noncooperation must be resorted to by refusing to pay taxes and also other means of struggle should be adopted.

In his speech introducing the resolution, Gandhiji made it clear that "it is an open secret that we have in our camp sharp differences of opinion as to the lead congressmen should receive". He also laid it down that "you cannot take this report piecemeal or chop it up, for it is an organic whole".<sup>21</sup>

21. Ibid, p 267.



This is obviously an oblique reference to the earlier AICC resolution moved by Srinivas Iyengar and supported by J. M. Sen Gupta where it was passed that while the AICC adhered to the decisions of the Madras Congress declaring complete independence, it also accepted the recommendations of the Nehru report as regards its stand on the settlement of the communal differences.

On 27 December, Jawaharlal Nehru moved an amendment to Mahatma Gandhi's resolution more or less along the lines passed at the AICC earlier. In his impassioned speech he said inter alia:

"I submit to you honestly that if I have energy to serve the country that energy oozes out of me at the very thought of dominion status... This is a conflict between imperialism and all that is not imperialism and if you look at it from that point of view, you cannot for one moment think of dominion status so long as Britain has the empire around her."<sup>22</sup>

Subhas Chandra Bose moved an amendment which declaring its adherence to the Madras resolution of complete independence and approving the constitution drawn up by the All-parties' committee wanted to shorten the time of the ultimatum given to the British government in India for acceptance of the Nehru report to one year, ie up to 31 December 1929. Jawaharlal Nehru supported the amendment.

On the morning of 29 December, Gandhiji moved for the withdrawal of his previous resolution and wanted to substitute it by a new one wherein Subhas Bose's amendment of one year's ultimatum was accepted. It was also decided that no copy of the said resolution need be sent to the viceroy. Jawaharlal Nehru absented himself from the session to demonstrate his disagreement with what was going on. Gandhiji was sharp, a little on the defensive as far as withdrawing one resolution to replace it by another is

22. Op cit, p 273.

concerned, and certainly quite sarcastic about Jawaharlal, in his speech at this session.

The whole speech of Gandhiji is quite long, running into more than 5000 printed words. There were some interruptions and it is doubtful whether anybody else of the national leadership would have been able to pilot it.

Gandhiji had to appear again at the end of the Congress session on 31 December 1928 at the open session and moved the latter resolution saying inter alia that all controversies between independence and Swaraj must be stopped (we have already quoted this speech above).

#### WORKERS' DEMONSTRATION AT THE CALCUTTA CONGRESS

A huge workers' demonstration of 20,000 took place at the Congress pandal on 30 December 1928. The demonstration of the workers from the Lilooah railway workshop and other industries had a tremendous effect and could not be ignored by any of the leading dailies. Thus, the *Times of India* of Bombay, in its next day's issue of 31 December, under the banner headline of "Labour Demonstration in Congress Pandal: Leaders Denounce Dominion Status: Communist Posters Carried by Processionists" reported that the workers' demonstration had demanded a "Socialist Republic of India" in their placards. It also said that Motilal Nehru, the Congress president received them at the gate.

Newspaper reports differ. The *Statesman* charged that the workers had 'invaded' the Congress pandal, there was a great tussle between the workers and the volunteers of the Congress, as a result of which several persons were injured.

Actually what happened was that there was a prior request by the labour leaders to the Congress reception committee as the former wanted to hold their Bengal Labour Congress at the Congress pandal itself, which was named "Deshbandhu Nagar".

This is how *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, reporting next day (31 December 1928) said: "The Congress authorities, it is said, apprehending trouble in case the crowd block the gate of the Congress pandal, issued notice that the Bengal Labour conference would not be held at the Congress pandal..." and prevented the procession being organised from the maidan (the present Shahid Minar Maidan) to the Congress pandal at Park Circus, a distant of at least six kilometres.

The Congress leaders agreed, after some discussion, to allow the workers to come to the Congress pandal in a procession. According to the *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, 20,000 workers participated in a "two mile long procession", carrying placards bearing slogans such as "You don't lose anything but your chains", "Long live Independent Republic of India" etc.

"When the procession reached Deshbandhu Nagar", reports *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, "all the roads leading to the pandal were blocked. The volunteers came out in large number and asked the processionists not to block the traffic. The labourers proceeded straight to the pandal gate. The volunteers tried their level best to check the crowd but failed and the big crowd made a dash to the main gate. Great confusion prevailed for the time being and the volunteers from all sides came to the place and barricaded the road with their lathis, there was a clash between the parties. In the melee some of the volunteers and members of the processionists were more or less injured. The situation took a serious turn..."

"Pandit Motilal Nehru, Pandit Malaviya, Mr Sen Gupta (J.M.) who were in the convention pandal came out and decided to open the gate. Meanwhile, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Mr Motilal Kothari who were on horseback approached the crowd and told them that they could hold the meeting on Congress grounds." They assembled at the National Flag staff and were addressed by Joglekar, Kothari and others.

"They were then allowed to enter the pandal... They

silently took their seats. A mass meeting was held presided over by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.

“Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru then addressed the gathering, thanked them for their peaceful behaviour... and reminded them that they have been allowed to hold their meeting for only an hour, after which they must quit the pandal as peacefully as they entered...”

“Pandit Motilal Nehru, president of the Congress, said that he was pleased to see the labourers and expressed his full sympathy with them...”<sup>21</sup>

A resolution was adopted at this meeting, which said:

“This mass meeting of the workers and peasants from all industries declares that we the workers and peasants of the land shall not rest content till complete independence is established and all exploitation from capitalism and imperialism cease. We do call upon the National Congress to keep the goal before them and organise the national forces for that purpose.”

The meeting was organised and addressed by labour leaders like Bankim Mukherjee, Shibnath Banerjee and by comrades Dharani Goswami, Radharaman Mitra, Gopendra Chakravarty and also by K. C. Mitra. The latter particularly wanted to secure Rs 25,000 for the relief of the striking workers at Bauria.

At the end of an hour, it was announced that Mahatma Gandhi was waiting at the gate to address the workers, which he did. After this peacefully and in an orderly manner, the workers left the pandal.

The first document (No XI) we are publishing in connection with the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress is by M. N. Roy who makes the point at the very outset: “the nationalist movement is split into two distinct fractions, one representing the big bourgeoisie and the other the petty bourgeoisie. The reconciliation of the two fractions can take place only at the terms of the former”.

Roy suggests that a "process of class differentiation" is taking place in the nationalist movement as a result of which a "growing rebelliousness of the petty bourgeois left-wing, on the one side, has been simultaneous with the concentration, on the other, of all political groups representing the big bourgeoisie". He also criticises the left for taking "a very weak and equivocal position", pointing out that "in the meeting of the All-Parties conference which adopted the draft constitution, the spokesmen of the left expressed their disagreement with the document, but did not vote against it, as they said, they did not want to obstruct the work of the conference." He refers to the development of the Independence League, Republican Party, Republican Army, Volunteer Corps, Workers and Peasants Party and such other organisation of minor importance" as instances of "radicalisation of the nationalist movement taking place in consequence of class differentiation".

As we know, the Independence for India League started functioning and that also without much success. The Workers and Peasants Party had a big role which has already been partly dealt with by comrade Adhikari in III(C) Part I, of this Volume. Obviously, Roy was attaching undue importance to the Republican Party, Army and the like which remained all paper bodies, including the Socialist Youth League, which we shall record later. Therefore it is doubtful whether his judgement "had not the left leaders allowed themselves to be hopelessly outmanoeuvred, the coming meeting of the Congress would have been the scene of the battle for the leadership of the nationalist movement" is valid in the light of actual events and relations of forces existing at the time.

What actually happened, as we have seen, is that the British imperialists were unable to effect a compromise with the rightwing of the national bourgeois leadership in 1929, when the general crisis of capitalism had taken a particularly bad turn with the Wall Street crash. Correspondingly the whole national movement went forward and adopted the Complete Independence resolution in the 1929 session of the Indian National Congress.

The second document (Document XII) we are including is the full text of the main resolution with the main amendments moved by Nimbkar and Joglekar.

The third document (Document XIII, Meerut Record, P 1676) we are reprinting here was found enclosed in a communication received from Berlin along with a letter addressed to Suhasini Chattopadhyaya. The letter was signed by R and the article by Abdur Rahman. The article was meant for publication in *Spark*, the journal edited by M. G. Desai from January 1929.

M. G. Desai in his statement before the prosecution counsel at Meerut on 20 November 1931 denied having any knowledge that R and Abdur Rahman were the same person and that was M. N. Roy. He said further: "I never had any connection or communication with M. N. Roy directly or indirectly..."

This document (XIII) is a comprehensive one, hailing the emergence of the working class as the driving force of the national revolution. There is a certain comparison with the events of the French bourgeois democratic revolution of 1789-93 which we need not go into here, but what is of interest is the kind of formulation, as "the failure, rather refusal, of the bourgeoisie to lead the national revolution caused the rise of radicalism; the inability of the latter to capture the leadership when it was there waiting to be captured by a bold hand, opens the way for the proletariat to appear on the scene independently. If the radical bourgeoisie cannot be driven to capture the leadership of the revolution, the proletariat must assume the leadership themselves; otherwise, it will be used by its present owners, the bourgeoisie, to liquidate the revolution." It is logical to deduce from this the final conclusion: "History has bestowed upon the Indian proletariat the role to hold high the standard of national revolution."

The prosecution at Meerut held that this document XIII was written by M. N. Roy though not finally and conclusively established. But the very nature of the circumstances which led to its discovery and, above all, its style of writing and analysis of events, with its efforts to compare the

event of Calcutta workers' demonstration with those of the French bourgeois-democratic revolution are strong pointers to the authorship of the article being of M. N. Roy.

#### INDEPENDENCE OF INDIA LEAGUE

On 29 August 1928 Jawaharlal Nehru, in his speech before the All-Parties' conference at Lucknow made it quite clear that he was not for dominion status as suggested by the conference, but for complete independence, and that the All-Parties' conference "was appointed principally to find a solution for our communal difficulties".

Then he read out a statement, which says, inter alia:

"We, the signatories of this statement, are of opinion that the constitution of India should only be based on full independence. We feel that the resolution that has been placed before the All-Parties' conference definitely commits those who support it to a constitution based on what is termed dominion status..."<sup>21</sup>

The signatories to the statement on independence as above met on the evening of 30 August 1928 and decided to form a body called the "Independence for India League". The following resolutions were passed by them:

"(1) Resolved that we members of the Indian National Congress present at this meeting being firmly of opinion that the immediate goal of the people of India should be full independence, do hereby form the Independence for India League;

(2) The object of this League is achievement of independence for India and the League shall carry on propaganda in this behalf;

(3) Members of the League shall also be members of the Indian National Congress;

(4) No member of the League shall advance any claim on behalf of himself or another person or group for political or economic rights based on membership of religion or sect, nor shall he work for or advocate what has come to be called communalism in India;

(5) No member of an organisation which has for its object the attainment of political or economic rights based on membership of religion or sect can be a member of the League;

(6) The League shall oppose communalism in every way, but it may support it when it considers proper and necessary by mutual arrangements between two or more groups of communities."

There are three more clauses re. membership fee, drafting of a constitution and the names of the signatories who were described as "provincial organisers of the League".

At general meetings of the members of the League held in Delhi on 4 and 5 November, along with electing Srinivasa Iyengar as the president, Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Bose as joint secretaries and Shiva Prasad Gupta as treasurer, and a provisional all-India council, it was also decided to start a weekly paper, to "associate with the League against Imperialism" and "to draw up a programme" in order to place it before the next meeting of the all-India council at Calcutta before the session of the National Congress there in the last week of December 1928.

By 31 January 1929 (ie one month after the session of the Indian National Congress ended at Calcutta), Jawaharlal Nehru in a letter to the members of the all-India council of the League was complaining: "Even before the Calcutta session I found it difficult to get members of the League to take very much interest in the tasks that had been entrusted to them... The programme committee was almost equally oblivious of its duty. Ultimately, finding no response whatever, I circulated a draft programme myself. To this also there was practically no response. Only Dr B. N. Dutta (Bhupendra Nath Dutta) sent a draft of his own and Shiva Prasad Gupta also wrote briefly on the subject. The other members of the committee, which included all the office-bearers, sent no word of any kind..."

"Our League cannot continue in a state of coma. It must be either a live body or cease to exist. The League came into existence primarily for the ideal of independence, but it clearly felt at the same time and repeatedly stated that



*mere political independence is not enough. In our objectives therefore we deliberately included the reconstitution of Indian society on the basis of social and economic equality.*"<sup>25</sup>

This linking up of political independence with general demands for economic and social equality is spelt out further by the programme of the League, UP branch (obviously J. Nehru's draft) as follows:

"... The League must therefore seek to change the present capitalist and feudal basis of society. These changes can only be brought by developing sanctions to enforce demands and sanctions can be developed only by organisation of those groups and classes which suffer and are exploited most under the existing system."<sup>26</sup>

We are presenting here two documents, the first by M. N. Roy undated and unsigned, but established as such from the Meerut Case records [Document XIV, P 1348 (37)].

It is a very detailed criticism of the manifesto and the programme of the Independence for India League, mainly on strictly Marxist lines. It seeks to define what is meant by a programme. And it has given the outline of such a programme at the end.

The second document (Document XV) by Clemens Dutt, written as an article in *Labour Monthly* of January 1929, begins with a description of the whole origin of this independence movement. While Roy's article is more pedantic in nature, Dutt's is a more appreciative one. It says: "The new League... published a manifesto and provisional programme. (This is the Bengal programme—ed.) The programme is adopted with minor alterations in Bombay and elsewhere. This programme itself expressed in the sharpest and clearest form both the positive and the negative aspects of the new movement and provides a key to the contradictory elements within it..." It praises the "economic pro-

25. Ibid, pp 261-62.

26. Ibid, p 287.

gramme" as the "most far-reaching in character of any programme yet put forward by a bourgeois nationalist organisation. It has a decidedly socialist tinge. It is lavish in its promises on behalf of the masses. All these things are new in the history of the Indian nationalist movement and reflect the changed conditions of the national struggle."

Then it compares the social aspect of the programme with Dr Sun Yat-Sen's demands for "nationalism, socialism and democracy". While suggesting that the "socialist tinge of the Independence League largely owes its adoption to the active propaganda of Jawaharlal Nehru, who... has also provided the movement with a definite theory of socialist reformism, borrowed from the European social democratic parties", the article finally passes judgement as: "Jawaharlal Nehru, S. C. Bose and new left-wing of bourgeois nationalism stand forward not as the representatives of revolutionary socialism but as the champions of reformist social democracy, lavish and exuberant with radical phrase-making but very vague and hesitant when it comes to the means by which their phrases shall be put into practice."

This judgement is no doubt in full keeping with the whole tone and tenor of the sectarian line that the sixth congress of the Comintern had adopted both as regards social democracy as well as in relation to the broad anti-imperialist national movement and the relation of class forces there.

#### THE SOCIALIST YOUTH CONGRESS

A Socialist Youth Congress was held at the Rammohan hall in Calcutta on 27 December 1928 at the time of the sessions of the Calcutta Congress.

Dr Bhupendranath Dutta was the chairman of the reception committee and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was the president.

Ram Mohan library hall in north Calcutta accommodates easily about a thousand persons and president-elect J. Nehru was lustily cheered as he arrived.

Dr Dutta in his speech drew the attention of the youth

with Marxist views to give a socio-economic analysis of the situation and suggested the formation of many study circles for the same.

Jawaharlal Nehru in his speech said that according to him "only by true socialism was there any chance for the independence of the country to be achieved. Socialism is not a mere war cry but needs to be learnt, studied and practised".

There was a big six point resolution which (i) condemns the shooting affairs at Bamangachi, Bombay and Bauria; (ii) condemns the Trade Disputes Bill and Public Safety Bill; (iii) demands complete independence and not dominion status; (iv) declares communism as the way out; (v) study circles to be formed as one of its organisational directives; and (vi) suggests dictatorship of the proletariat as the concrete form in which a socialist way can work.

### III

The first All India Workers and Peasants Party conference was held from 23 to 25 December 1928 in Calcutta ie just prior to the session of the Indian National Congress. Comrade Sohan Singh Josh was the president. He also met his death recently this year fighting for the cause till the very last. As his will says *inter alia*:

"I am leaving the stage after full ripe age. I am happy that I dedicated my life for the cause of the working people who are the source of all wealth, and on whose labour the life of society depends. My life, in my view, has been meaningful and fruitful."

It is interesting to record that it was at this conference of the Workers and Peasants Party that comrade Josh met Bhagat Singh who was already leading an underground existence and thinking also along near-Marxist lines. This has been recorded by comrade Josh in his memoirs on Bhagat Singh.

We are first presenting here a set of six documents on this conference of the Workers and Peasants Party.

The first document in this connection (Document XVI) is the presidential speech of comrade Sohan Singh Josh, extracts of which are given here. From this it will be seen that comrade Josh was stressing: (a) the need for a central organisation; (b) the need for a party based on class struggle; and (c) recognition of complete independence. This needed to be particularly stressed in view of the impending sharp clash of two sections of opinion inside the National Congress—Nehru report demanding dominion status and complete independence (we have already dealt with it in great detail).

It must also be noted that comrade Sohan Singh Josh was posing the demand for abolition of landlordism and the princely states as one of his central demands. In other words, the broad anti-feudal tasks of the democratic revolution was being stressed though the democracy visualised was certainly of a more advanced type (the word 'People's Democracy' or 'National Democracy' were not in use in communist vocabulary then). Comrade Josh had also brought out the need for international affiliations, more concretely it meant seeking affiliation with the 'League against Imperialism' and taking a firm stand against the danger of war.

In the Political Resolution (Document XVII) the Workers and Peasants Party directs a sharp and unequivocal stand against the Nehru report. It characterises the report as "a bourgeois-democratic scheme, of a not very advanced type, and in relation to imperialism constitutes almost the minimum which the Indian bourgeoisie could demand".

While noting the advance of the workers and petty-bourgeoisie, and "a less marked, but important, advance in 'the peasants' movement", "some sections of the petty-bourgeoisie have also manifested increased activity, as is shown by the continued growth and activity of the youth movement, the enthusiastic acceptance almost everywhere in the youth organisations and in Congress meetings etc. of the slogans of independence..."

The political resolution is equally sharp in its criticism of the Independence for India League and says its posi-

tion "contains nothing totally unacceptable to the more moderate wing of the bourgeoisie". According to the resolution though the Independence for India League demands eight hours working day, unemployment pay, sickness, insurance, pensions etc. and also nationalisation of industry, "this is a programme not intended to rouse the revolutionary energy of the masses in pursuit of their economic demands, but is calculated to bring Indian industrialism into line with modern bourgeois practice, including its methods of keeping the workers under control". Further, "the unreal and hypocritical character of the programme is perhaps most definitely revealed by the fact that throughout there is not a word mentioned of the method by which the aims are to be achieved".

"The 'Independence for India League' is thus to be looked upon as the resultant of different tendencies: (1) "a hesitating and as yet confused move on the part of a section of the petty-bourgeoisie towards a revolutionary policy, with perhaps on the part of some of the idea of exploiting the revolutionary mass movement for the attainment of independence for the middle classes. (2) An attempt by a section of the bourgeoisie to extort concession from imperialism by threatening it with a movement for independence among the middle classes and the masses. (3) An attempt by a section of the bourgeoisie to regain that control over the mass movement and the petty-bourgeoisie which the increasingly reactionary attitude of the bourgeois class as a whole, and of the bourgeois labour leaders, is causing it to lose."

Opposing sharply from the policy of the Independence League the Workers and Peasants Party wanted to emphasise that it "must expose the Nehru report as a whole"; by independence must be meant the "destruction of imperialist political and military control and economic penetration, and hence necessitating revolution". "Abolition of landlordism", in principle without compensation" and "the consequent necessity of agrarian revolution" was also demanded.

The third document (Document XVIII) we are present-

ing in connection with conference is on the trade union movement. What is demanded is "Industrial Unionism, a plan of organisation in which all the workers of each industry are in one union, covering the whole country". No industrial peace, an economic policy of aggressiveness, strikes including general strikes used for political purposes depending on the situation, stress on organisation—these are the principal tasks outlined for the trade-union movement for the Workers and Peasants Party.

The fourth document (Document XIX) in this series is purported to be a thesis outlining the main principles and policy of the Workers and Peasants Party. It points out that it is wrong to say that the basis of Indian life is caste and not class. It accepts the need for industrialism but "the attainment of independence is the first task of any movement which strives to improve the position of the masses". It gives out an alliance of class forces which will achieve this. It is an alliance of three classes—workers, peasants and the petty-bourgeoisie under the leadership of the working class, the enemy class being both imperialism and the Indian bourgeoisie.

The fifth document (Document XX) is a report of the conference.

The sixth document (Document XXI) is the constitution adopted at the conference.

The seventh document and the last document in this series (Document XXII) is the message sent by the executive committee of the Communist International to the conference. The message is a sharp attack against "the influence of opportunist bourgeois nationalism". "The greatest danger to the organisation of the masses, to the creation of a revolutionary bloc of the proletariat and the peasantry and to the proletarian leadership in this bloc, consists not only in bourgeois nationalism as such, but comes from the organisations and groups of 'prominent' petty-bourgeois intellectuals actually influenced by the form of the independence League."

"The experience of all revolutions shows that the peasantry is inevitably deceived and defeated if it acts with-

out the alliance and the leadership of the proletariat.” “The organisation of the workers and peasants bloc is based upon the common interest of the workers, peasants, and the town poor, in the fight against imperialism and feudal reaction. Nevertheless, it does not eliminate the class differences and therefore it does not imply by any means the fusion of the workers and peasants into one PARTY.” “The Indian proletariat will be the champion of the national-revolutionary fight and lead to victory of the peasantry, the town poor, and all the toilers, if it organises and consolidates the vanguard, the Communist Party, which will educate the working masses in the spirit of a clear and unmistakable class policy in the realisation of the need for tremendous sacrifices in order to overthrow imperialism and bourgeoisie. The existing (only on paper) Communist Party of India, since it does not show any signs of revolutionary life, has no grounds to consider and even to call itself communist, although there are individual communists among its members. Under the conditions of imperialist terror by the feeble organisation of the Indian workers and the bullying of the reformist trade union bureaucrats the task of building a genuine communist party will be considerably facilitated if at the same time broad revolutionary organisations of the workers are formed with the active participation of communists, or a broad left wing created in the trade union movement upon the platform of consistent class struggle... Concerning organisational forms, your conference will have to discuss the question of separating the workers’ organisations from the peasants’ organisations, so that the former be ensured a clear-cut and consistent class development, and the latter the full embracing of the struggling peasantry.”

M. N. Roy sent an article for *Spark* dated 19 January 1929 which was later printed in *Inprecor* dated 1 February 1929 (Document XXIII), which covers almost the same ground as the message of the EC of the Comintern but couched in a different language, and with referring to some more details of the Indian movement as it existed then.

His observations re.: the Independence League and other organisations are of much interest, from which we are quoting a portion here:

“During the meeting of the National Congress the following subsidiary bodies held their separate conferences: 1. All-India Youth League; Swadhin Bharat Sangha (organisation of those who suffered persecution for revolutionary activity); 3. Socialist Youth League; 4. All-India Volunteer Corps. The members of these bodies represent the most active element and majority of the Congress rank and file. Socially, they are all petty-bourgeois intellectuals who are, as a rule, in very precarious economic condition. The Independence League, recently formed by the leftwing leaders of the Congress, is at present the political leader of this revolutionary nationalist mass.” Regarding the relationship between the Workers and Peasants Party and the Communist Party, M. N. Roy judges it in the following terms:

“Meeting in this atmosphere of revolutionary development from all sides, the Workers and Peasants Party, whose driving force are the communists, was objectively the important event of the moment. The Workers and Peasants Party is not the Communist Party, although the communists play in it the leading and dominating role. Several years ago it appeared on the scene as the first signs of radicalisation of the nationalist masses. As such the communists supported it, and aided its growth. Practically all the great strikes of the last two years were led under the banner of the Workers and Peasants Party. The object of the communists was to make this new party the rallying ground for all the nationalist revolutionary elements, to develop it into a revolutionary nationalist mass party which is a crying need of the moment.”

Another article in two parts on the conference of Workers and Peasants Party appeared in *Inprecor* dated 29 March 1929 (Document XXIV) and the second concluding portion of the former dated 5 April 1929 (Document XXV) by Paul Schubert signing as P. Sch. is included here. This article based on two parts is really a criticism and a



polemical article against Roy's article on the Workers and Peasants Party. According to comrade P. Sch. "the provincial conferences of these parties (ie the workers and peasants parties, later fused into an all-India Workers and Peasants Party—ed.) were superior to the central conference in that they revealed a great contact with the masses and raised in a mere concrete form the questions of the struggle which is now proceeding". In this connection, the article hails the slogan raised by the Calcutta workers welcoming the conference delegates for 'an independent Soviet Republic of India'.

In this connection comrade P. Sch. takes his stand against the slogan of 'constituent assembly' which M. N. Roy is accused of writing in his 'Appeal to the Independence movement' (*Forward Annual*, 1928, but not reproduced here).

In the second part of the article comrade P. Sch. points out that while a united front between the Workers and Peasants Party and the Independence League may be allowed, he is criticising the position of the former "not on account of the ignoring of the united front but on account of the insufficiently clear formulation of the conditions under which this united front can be carried out". His position is that as far as the Independence League is concerned it is not on the basis of its programme so much "as on the basis of its practice, on the basis of concrete political acts, which are intelligible and palpable to the masses than its programme. It is difficult to understand why comrade Roy refused to recognise a criticism of this sort; for if anything can really help the League to display ability to fight against imperialism in any form to any extent, if there are elements in the League which can be won for the revolutionary movement, then this can be achieved only as a result of such thorough, concrete and definite criticism". "The mistakes..." therefore of the conference and according to comrade P. Sch. "exceedingly serious mistakes" are mainly due to the fact that it did not realise the necessity of the leading role of the proletariat in the anti-imperialist fighting bloc of the toilers".

Comrade P. Sch. concludes by demanding "the organisation of the proletariat advanceguard in a communist party. There exists all the elements for such an organisation".

#### IV

The last item we have to deal is a meeting of the central executive committee of the Communist Party of India held at Calcutta on 27, 28 and 29 December 1928, certainly in semi-illegal conditions. Only minutes based on Meerut records are available.

It appears from these minutes (Document XXVI) that comrade Muzaffar Ahmad was in the chair. It was in this meeting that comrades Adhikari and Mirajkar were admitted as members, and S. V. Ghate was elected the general secretary. Also Hasrat Mohani and Hasan were expelled.

A decision to have an EC of 10 was arrived at, of which 5 from Bombay, 3 from Calcutta and 2 from Punjab will function as the full EC. The 5 in Bombay is to function as the EC in between two EC meetings, with a minimum quorum of 4.

These 10 EC members were as follows:

5 from Bombay: Mirajkar, Dange, Nimbkar, Joglekar, Ghate.

3 from Calcutta: Muzaffar Ahmad, Halim and Samsul Huda.

2 from Punjab: Abdul Majid and Sohan Singh Josh.

The thesis of the Comintern was gone into and it was decided to accept it as a basis for work. There was a decision 'to test the possibility of functioning as an open party'. As we know the Meerut arrests took place three months later.

The CEC meeting of the Communist Party of India had adopted a manifesto (Document XXVII) which we are including here in full.

# 1. INDIA

## *The Economic Position*

India presents an enormous field of exploitation for the British capitalists. The methods of exploitation have been more or less changed from time to time in order to adapt them to the changing economic situation in India, Great Britain and the rest of the world. Till the world war, India was exploited by British imperialism mostly as a source of raw product and a market for British goods. The new situation arising with these was met by a fundamental change of policy on the part of the British bourgeoisie. The central feature of the new policy was the industrialisation of India under the control of British finance capital, and with the cooperation (not on equal terms) of the Indian bourgeoisie, for which last purpose political reforms were introduced, giving the later a semblance of power.

The work of the Industrial commission set up in 1916, furthered by the introduction of a protective tariff system, laid the foundation for industrialisation. Nevertheless, the new economic policy met with redoubtable obstacles which made necessary a modification, if not a definite alteration of the original course. In the first place it was difficult to grant concessions to the Indian bourgeoisie which would not react to the detriment of British capitalism, and to the value of India as a market for British manufactured goods. Secondly, the protracted crisis of British capitalism in the home country, reaching its climax in the period immediately following the general strike, put great difficulties in the way of providing the necessary means for the carrying out of the industrialisation of India. In the slump following the post-war boom, the immature Indian

industries faced with intense foreign competition, suffered severely. Further, the existing state of Indian economy was not adequate for intensive industrialisation and for exploitation by British finance capital under the new conditions of British imperialism. In particular there was necessary a through-going overhauling of the financial system and the adoption of measures to increase agricultural production and the buying capacity of the peasants.

All these factors have combined to bring about a modification of the policy of promoting industrialisation with concessions to the Indian bourgeoisie, which fact accounts for the present conflict between the latter and the British capitalists. The steps taken by the British bourgeoisie to re-model the currency and banking system afforded sufficient proof that they were determined to serve the interests of British finance-capital at all costs.

A clear indication of the new attitude towards industrialisation with refusal of concessions to Indian capitalists is seen in relation to the tariff question. The recommendations of the special textile tariff board have been ignored. The Indian demand for protection for the glass and chemical industries largely in Indian hands, has not even received the consideration of the tariff board. At the same time a special amendment of the Steel Protection act was hastily passed last March granting a protective duty against the import of steel railway wagons. The policy of promoting only such industries as are securely in British hands or essential for war needs, and in any case of acting so as not to damage British capitalist interests, became definite on the introduction of a preferential duty for British steel in 1927.

It is not however necessary to conclude that the policy of industrialisation has been abandoned. It may be noted that in spite of the central industrial depression, the production of iron and steel in India is still rapidly expanding. It is necessary to look beyond the present deflation crisis to the period when, as in England after deflation, there will be a renewed outburst of capitalist activity and

a renewed impetus to British investment in India and the development of nominal Indian industries.

Agriculture is still the basic industry of India, about 73 per cent, of the whole population depending on it. Here an acute agrarian problem is created by the penetration of capitalism into agriculture in conflict with feudal elements in village economy, intensifying exploitation and upsetting the previous character of agricultural production and the relation of the classes engaged in it.

The progressive undermining of the basis of Indian agriculture is seen firstly in stagnation as regards production, secondly, in the pauperisation and proletarianisation of the peasants together with minute fragmentation of land holdings and the accumulation of a gigantic burden of debts, and thirdly, in the resulting development of revolutionary unrest among the peasants.

The situation has sufficiently alarmed British imperialism to cause the appointment of an agricultural expert as viceroy and the sending out of a special Royal commission on agriculture. The proposals of British imperialism to meet the developing agricultural crisis are of two kinds, technical and organisational. The first includes schemes for the development and rationalisation of agriculture so as directly to increase the volume of production. The second includes proposals for consolidation of holdings, on the lines of the recent bill in Bombay Legislature Council which will involve the buying out and proletarianisation of peasants cultivating uneconomic holdings, and organisational measures such as the development of cooperation and improved methods of marketing produce.

None of these things will affect the root problem which can only be solved by an agricultural revolution. Nor can the situation be met by the reactionary proposals of the Indian petty-bourgeoisie who advocate the return to pre-capitalist forms in their propaganda of "Charkha" (hand spinning wheel), and of so-called "Village reconstruction". The perspective of inevitable agricultural revolution re-

mains, and it is not too much to say that the agricultural revolution will be the central axis of the coming national mass revolutionary upheaval.

### *Political Situation*

The situation in India has undergone a radical change in the period of four years since the fifth congress of the Communist International. The change is the expression of a re-shifting of class forces engaged in the national struggle against imperialism. At the beginning and during the earlier part of the period, the national movement was still dominated by the consequences of the collapse of its post-war phase of 1919-22. Since then, the depression hanging over the movement has been dissipated by the influence of a combination of internal and external factors (one of the chief among them being the reaction to the Chinese revolution). The National movement in India is now entering a new phase, far richer in revolutionary possibilities than any earlier one.

The fight of the Indian bourgeoisie for an increased participation in capitalist economics has been chiefly a fight for a change in the character of imperialist control which practically dominates capitalist economy. It has not been a fight for the destruction of imperialist control itself. It has not been of a revolutionary character, because of the fundamental contradiction involved in the nature of bourgeois opposition to imperialism. It is an opposition essentially on behalf of a national capitalist development of the productive forces of India; it can succeed in its logical aim of destroying foreign control, which is blocking this development, only by the revolutionary intervention of social forces hostile to capitalism.

This contradiction was at the basis of the betrayal of the mass revolutionary movement of 1919-22 by its bourgeois leadership. Since then, the same contradiction has imposed upon the national movement, so far as it is led by the bourgeoisie, a policy of compromise with imperialism. All that the bourgeoisie has done and is doing in the way of

opposition to imperialism is in the nature of manoeuvre undertaken to secure the most favourable ground from which to negotiate for a modus vivendi with imperialist interests. It may not be possible for any modus vivendi, answering to the needs of the bourgeoisie, to be arrived at upon any ground whatever, more particularly in view of the latest attitude of the British government.

The essential basis of the political programme for which the bourgeoisie is fighting is nothing more than "Dominion status" for India within the British empire. The call to "mass passive resistance" (a legacy of 1919-1922) as a means to bring pressure to bear with regard to the "national demand" was dropped by the Swaraj Party. At the same time, the Swaraj Party changed its parliamentary policy from obstruction towards the British government into a slightly disguised collaboration with it.

Already before the appointment of the Simon commission the British government had ceased its policy of economic concessions to the Indian bourgeoisie. The demand of the Bombay industrialists for a protective tariff on the import of textiles was not acceded to. At the same time, the British government handled the Indian paper currency in a manner to create particularly favourable conditions for the recuperation of British trade in India. A little while ago an attempt was made to secure and strengthen imperialist control over Indian finances through the establishment of a federal reserve bank.

### *The Politically Bankrupt Bourgeoisie*

In spite of this, the bourgeois opposition to the Simon commission—although the commission was declared to be in the most impudent and insulting challenge to the Indian people—did not put the struggle on a higher revolutionary level than before. The opposition of the bourgeoisie to imperialism remains a strictly "constitutional" opposition, in spite of the "Left orientation" of the session of the Indian National Congress of 1927. At this session the bourgeois parties which constitute the Congress were for

the first time compelled—in the light of present events—to acknowledge the complete bankruptcy of the reformist leaders of the national movement. Secondly, it came to light that they are not in a position to discover a substitute for their discredited compromise policy.

The significance of that session in itself is not merely that it is a self-condemnation of the bourgeoisie as politically bankrupt. It also signifies that the national movement has reached its conscious phase, that it has become aware of its revolutionary aim, and that this aim cannot be either obscured or ignored. The change of the formulation of the aim from “Dominion status” to “complete national independence” is a change from the national movement conceived in terms of bourgeois interest, in the interest of the whole Indian people. It is a historical moment in the inner evolution of the national movement of liberation in India.

The declaratory resolution on independence has been flagrantly contradicted not only by every programmatic resolution at the very session of the Congress where it was adopted, but also by every activity of the Congress and every declaration on its behalf since then. To take two prominent examples: at the All-Parties conference convened in the beginning of 1928 by the working committee (political bureau) of the Congress, the constitution provisionally agreed upon for presentation to an ad hoc National Convention to consist mostly of the members of the All-India committee (Central committee), of the Congress, was based not on “complete national independence”, but on “the fullest responsible government”; in the legislative assembly the leader of the Swaraj Party affirmed that while independence was the goal, his party would for the moment be content with “Dominion status as a half-way house”, that is, as an intermediate stage. Other more or less subsidiary developments of the situation prove that the bourgeoisie had fixed upon “complete national independence” not as the revolutionary “aim of the Indian people”, but as a pseudo-revolutionary formula to be used



as a "threat" against the British government to extract concessions. The British government, on its side has shown by its continued "insolence" that it is fully convinced of the utter emptiness of the "threat".

The results which the bourgeoisie expected to receive at the very cheap price of a paper resolution on independence have failed to materialise. On the contrary, the attitude of the British government has undergone a change, in the words of the deputy leader of the Swaraj Party, from "persuasion, cooperation and compromise to its original position, that the might of the alien conquerors is their right". Having failed in its preliminary manoeuvres in the new situation, the bourgeoisie is now obliged to start a fresh political reconnaissance in order to discover a stronger position whence it can restart its policy of "persuasion, cooperation and compromise".

### *The Attempt to Control the "Left"*

For the purpose of getting nearer to the masses and utilising their revolutionary orientation for its reformist policy, the bourgeoisie has improved the methods and slogans it used in 1919-1922. It has taken into consideration the increased political development of the broad masses. In this advanced stage of development it is no longer possible for the bourgeois parties to force themselves on the masses as the leaders of the national revolutionary struggle. Neither is it possible to impress them with the revolutionary slogans of independence unless they are accompanied by an effort at revolutionary actions. With the independence slogan the bourgeoisie endeavours to keep under the influence of the bourgeois leaders the left nationalist elements composed of the mass of the petty bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia.

By keeping the leadership over the petty bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia in its hands, the bourgeoisie is endeavouring to establish a connection with the upper strata of the proletariat and the peasantry which it hopes to draw into its struggle.

The bourgeois leaders are now offering possibilities to the petty bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia which were formerly withheld from them, in order to develop their "radicalism".

The left nationalist elements were the tolerated inspirers of the independence resolution (one of them was its actual proposer). They are able now to use the apparatus of the Congress (more particularly of its provincial organisation) to popularise their own interpretation of independence, as "severance of British connection" and their ideal of "an independent democratic state" to be established in India on the "voluntary" departure of the imperialist army of occupation. Under the unofficial auspices of the Indian National Congress they were able to convene a Republican Congress, where they declared that "the sovereignty of India is vested solely and wholly in the people of India", and repudiated "any claim of the British parliament to interfere with the government of this country in internal or external affairs" (while the Indian National Congress itself does not abandon but keeps, so to say, in cold storage its policy of a "round table conference" with the representatives of this very British parliament to settle the character of a negotiated (?) democratic revolution in India). As to the revolutionary method which the leftwing would make use of to attain its republican aims, it is nothing more or less than "some form of intensive non-cooperation without violence."

What, however, is specific in the present evolution of the leftwing is not so much its republican as its "Socialist" orientation. The leftwing takes due notice of the "growth of the industrial revolution" taking place on "an international scale". In being "opposed to imperialism", it considers itself equally "opposed to capitalism as a system". Some form of "socialism" is as a matter of fact, the only possible alternative to imperialism. That being so, the president of the Republican Congress asked: "Do you wish the future government of the country to be based more or less on the exploitation of the masses by the (exploiting)

classes or do you wish to remove this exploitation and the causes thereof, and to have social equality between, the various members of the Republic?"

It was also as "Socialists" that the leftwing elements put on record their disagreement in principle with the general tendencies of the draft constitution drawn up by the last session of the All-Parties Conference. Organisationally unseparated from the bourgeois political parties and politically led by them, the nationalist leftwing, with its slogans of independence, social equality and socialism, has evolved into an instrument, in the hands of the bourgeoisie, for the penetration and vicarious leadership of the broad working masses, whose development as an independent political force may make all the difference between the bourgeois and proletarian struggle against imperialism.

### *The Class Struggle in India*

The class struggle of the Indian masses has at the present moment reached its most acute stage since the beginnings of capitalism in India in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Large and increasing masses of workers engaged in the most important industries have recently taken recourse to strikes and are carrying them out with great determination and courage against, very often, the military and armed police forces of the British government. In no case have the employers, either Indian or British, adequately satisfied the demands of the workers.

The big strike movement in progress in India at the present moment involves approximately a quarter of a million men and affects the state railroads, the engineering workshops, the textile and the metallurgical industries and municipal enterprises.

The last big strike movement, to which the present series of strikes may be compared, took place in 1921, when the post-war national revolutionary challenge to British imperialism drew its principal driving force from widespread strikes (and peasant risings) throughout the country. The lowest point in the curve of the strike movement as regards the number of both strikes and strikers was reached

in 1926, when the number of strikes had been reduced to 128 and that of strikers to 186,811, the disproportion between the number of strikes and the strikers showing the dispersal of the class struggle into local and sectional actions. From 1927 onwards, the curve begins to show an upward tendency. In the first quarter alone of 1928 the number of strikers has already reached a total—namely, a quarter of a million—which is higher than that for the whole of either 1926 or 1927.

The present strike movement is by all indications more than a passing phase, because the unbearable conditions of existence against which the industrial workers of India are revolting cannot be remedied in the present economic situation of the country. The situation is predominantly characterised by the Indo-British capitalist competition for the exploitation of the labour power of the working masses of India. Extensive and repeated recourse to strikes on the part of the workers is inevitable in the near future. The background of the strike movement is the rising disproportion between wages and prices and the consequent steady deterioration of the living conditions of the workers. The effect of this deterioration may be imagined when one remembers that the basic mass of the industrial workers of India had already been "living" far below the subsistence level.

### *The Importance of the Peasants*

The class struggle of the industrial proletariat in the urban centres is the class struggle of the most advanced and historically the most revolutionary section of the broad working masses of India. The revolutionary perspective of the class struggle of the industrial proletariat is large in so far as it is based on and unified with the revolutionary struggle of all other sections of the broad working masses. In consideration of the numerical weakness of the industrial proletariat of India, the character and tempo of growth of the class struggle of the non-industrial overwhelming majority of the broad working

masses are matters of primary importance in judging the situation at any given moment. The industrial proletariat of India does not exceed four million out of a population of 320 million (a proportion of 1.25 per cent). Whereas the number of agricultural proletariat—that is, all-time wage earners in the villages—is about 25,000,000, and that of the semi-proletarianised peasantry—that is, part-time wage earners—is about 50,000,000—altogether 75,000,000—thus accounting for more than half of the entire population occupied as actual cultivators.

If so this are added the large numbers of the poor and middle peasantry, subject to exploitation in one form or another, we have an idea of the overwhelming importance of the agrarian revolution in the struggle against imperialism.

The enormous growth in the number of the agricultural proletariat and the semi-proletarianised peasantry is a feature which becomes more pronounced as the capitalist development of the productive forces of India on the part of the two competing capitalist classes, one foreign and the other native, gains more momentum. Peasant economy has been penetrated by capitalist production, vast peasant masses have been gradually expropriated and turned from cultivating peasants into landless producers of commodities for the capitalist market, that is, simple wage earners selling their labour power to employers in a vast capitalist enterprise where they cannot find employment. The process has produced two important political results in opposite directions. On the one hand, a class of rich peasants, employing agricultural wage labour, has come into existence as a new potential (if not already actual) social basis for imperialist power (and native capitalist reaction); on the other hand, the organic unity of the class struggle in the village and the town has been demonstrated as a matter of practical experience on the part of the large masses of migratory workers engaged alternately in industrial and agricultural employment. In the actual disposition of class forces in India today, there is not other "danger" to British imperialism than that created by the

practical political consequences of the tendency of the agrarian and industrial masses to unite as conscious fighters in the class struggle.

Of all the classes of the population, it was the peasant masses on whom the consequences of the collapse of the revolutionary movement of 1919-1922 weighed most heavily. The most brutal repression by blood and iron was visited by the British government on the insurrectionary and militant peasant movement throughout the country (the militant peasant action in the north, peasant risings in central and eastern India, and finally the revolutionary episode of Chauri-Chaura in the united provinces). The result of the repression was a certain set-back in the peasant movement. But peasant risings of one kind or another (sometimes even armed, as in the so-called native states) have remained endemic in India since 1919-1922.

As of the industrial workers, so of the basic mass of the peasants, it can be said that they have reached generally a higher political consciousness because of the acuteness of the class struggle and in spite of imperialist repression, their own backward cultural conditions, and their consequent susceptibility to the influence of the social reactionary propaganda to the priests. It is particularly among the peasants of the Punjab, who took so prominent a part in the movement of 1919-22, that we remark a considerable advance. The political party of the Punjab peasants, namely, the Gadr (revolt) Party, has increased its influence and is beginning to evolve towards a clearer ideology as a party of the working masses. In the organ of the Punjab peasant movement, which is the only journal of its kind in the whole of India, we find a conscious and sustained approach towards an international class orientation. At a political conference of the peasants held last year in Amritsar (one of the chief cities of the Punjab), the majority opinion expressed itself against the reformist leadership of the Indian National Congress. Similar peasant conferences in other provinces of India are frequent and are a new feature of the public life of the country. Though these conferences confine themselves as yet to the "consti-

tutional" ventilation of partial demands and are sometimes dominated by bourgeois reformist leaders, yet they indicate a general awakening among the peasants to the need for political organisation. The economic problem created for the peasant by the fourfold exploitation by the British government, the landlord, money-lender, and the capitalist merchant, is insoluble except by a revolutionary change in land ownership. The general political awakening among the peasant masses is thus a prelude to their revolutionary orientation, given a nationwide political crisis such as that which happened in India in 1919-22, and towards which events in India are now again moving. There is already in some parts of the Bombay province (the same area of the Bombay province which was most ready in 1921-22 for revolutionary action) a mass peasant movement of "passive resistance" (somewhat in the style of 1919-22) to the demand of the British government for increased land revenue.

In the course of development of the class struggle, the illusion has been dissipated among the broad working masses that the opposition of the bourgeois parties to imperialism is at the same time an opposition to the capitalist system of exploitation. The political influence of the bourgeoisie over the working masses is already decreasing, and the same is also true of the majority of the organised industrial workers, although the reformist leaders still have the apparatus in their hands. Moreover, conditions events (sic!). The problem of the organisation of a genuine Communist Party as the vanguard of the proletariat, which must be the leader of the national revolution, is still to be solved.

Simultaneously with the attempt to form a legal communist party, there appeared in the various provinces a number of workers and peasants parties, in which the communist groups have taken a part. Growing originally as leftwing organisations within the Indian National Congress, these parties have since acquired an independent status as self-contained political parties. Of the four WPP's formed during 1925-27, those of Bengal and Bom-

bay alone have been politically active and have given themselves a certain organisational shape. The Bengal WPP (originally called the Labour Swaraj Party) was formed at the end of 1927 and has already held three annual conferences. Its policy is formulated in the report of the executive committee of the Bengal WPP submitted to the last annual conference held in March-April, 1928.

The policy of the Bengal WPP is defined in the resolution on the political situation adopted at the 1928 conference. After an analysis of the situation and a criticism of the Indian National Congress politics, the resolution concludes:

“The policy of the Party must be to carry forward the campaign for the boycott of the (Simon) commission to the utmost extent inspite of any sabotage. Strikes and ‘Hartals’ must be encouraged, and the masses brought into the movement by associating their demands with the national slogans. The campaign must demand complete national independence, and a constituent assembly elected by universal adult suffrage, which will decide finally the relation of India to the empire and solve the pressing economic problems of the masses.”

In the beginning of 1928 a meeting of the “Enlarged Executive” of the Bombay WPP adopted a number of important theses and resolutions as a basis for its party activities.

In its thesis on the general political situation, the enlarged executive of the Bombay WPP says:

“It is, therefore, essential that workingclass organisations, the trade unions and TUC fight and obtain freedom from bourgeois control, under which most of them now exist. They must also obtain freedom from the reactionary and confused ideas which the bourgeoisie cultivate amongst them. These things require an independent workers’ political party to educate, organise, and lead the workers in their struggle.

“Under the leadership of the industrial workers, the movement of the masses can go forward to abolish foreign exploitation, to establish democracy, and those elementary



pre-requisites of life which 95 per cent of the population of India still lack. By means of strikes, demonstrations, hartals and the more laborious means of organisation and education, the class consciousness and the solidarity of the masses will be raised to the level necessary before its task can be achieved."

The transformation of the left groups within the organisations of the National Congress, into workers and peasants parties as an independent political factor was one of the chief incidents in the history of 1927 (at the session of the National Congress in Gauhati, December 1926, the leftwing was inadequately represented and badly organised; it made itself heard only once at the Congress itself; but it was only at the conference of former political prisoners—the so-called "conference of political victims", held simultaneously with the session of the Congress, that the left succeeded in taking leadership into its hands). The establishment of workers and peasants parties became possible owing to the alliance of these left groups of the Congress with communists and proletarian elements. In this lies their importance as one of the organising factors of the national-revolutionary struggle, a factor which—given a correct policy—can develop into a party of the bloc of the proletariat, the peasantry and the revolutionary strata of the petty bourgeoisie, in the given stage of the struggle against imperialism. But on the other hand, this petty bourgeois origin of the workers and peasants parties makes itself still very much felt in the composition of the parties as well as in their programmes and activity. Thus it is pointed out in the resolution on the necessity of forming workers and peasants parties adopted at the conference of the Bombay organisation (February 1927), that the existing bourgeois parties do not represent the interests of the masses. It is said:

"Therefore the time is ripe for the creation of a political workers and peasants party capable of guaranteeing the social, economic and political progress of these classes, of standing up for their demands in the National Congress, helping with the organisation of trade unions and eman-

icipating them from alien influence under which they are at present, helping with the organisation of the peasants on the basis of their economic and social requirements and offering energetic and business-like opposition to the government.

“In as far as the necessary premise for the carrying-out of this programme is achievement of complete national independence from imperialism, the party will for this purpose collaborate with other organisations which adopt same platform and are willing to fight for its realisation.”

Thus, the party deems it necessary to limit its political activity to work within the National Congress; it attaches more importance to collaboration than to its independent role as a party.

In the address of the Workers and Peasants Party to the Indian National Congress in Madras (1927) no mention is made of the independent role of the party and it is even said “If the National Congress wants to carry on the struggle for national liberation it must become the party of the people.”

More than that, no definite distinction is made in it with regard to the Swaraj Party. In the last report of the Bengal Workers and Peasants Party (March, 1928) it is said that the opposition of the Workers and Peasants Party to the Swaraj Party is not due to the fact that the latter is a bourgeois party, but because it is not putting up a genuine struggle for independence.

The main weak point of the Workers and Peasants Party is that in practice, it is acting more as a leftwing of the Congress than as an independent political party. The Workers and Peasants Party cannot develop into a party of mass national-revolutionary struggle unless it emancipates itself entirely from the influence of bourgeois politicians and becomes transformed into a bloc of the working class with all the exploited masses under the leadership of the proletariat. On the other hand, it is entirely out of the question that the Workers and Peasants Party should be a substitute for the Communist Party, the organisation of which is absolutely necessary.

### *The Workers and Peasants Party*

The Bengal Workers and Peasants Party is based on individual as well as a collective membership. In connection with this report of its executive committee contains the following statement:

“In the course of the last year the individual membership of the party increased and now totals 125 members—an approximately equal number of peasants and intellectuals with a small admixture of manual workers. A branch of the party is to open soon in Dacca. The total membership, including members in the branches, is over 10,000. The membership, social composition, activity and political education of the members are far from satisfactory. However considerable progress has been made in all these directions.”

Unlike the Bengal organisation, the Bombay WPP is based on individual membership only. The actual membership of the Bombay WPP cannot be higher than the individual membership of the Bengal WPP. The Bombay Party has, however, succeeded in acquiring a predominant influence among the large industrial proletariat of Bombay. It was by its initiative in organisation that 30,000 workers of Bombay assembled in a separate political demonstration with revolutionary slogans on the occasion of the Simon commission to India, and in connection with the national campaign of boycott against the commission.

It is however in connection with the present strikes that both the Bengal and the Bombay WPP, have shown themselves to be in the closest contact with the industrial proletariat in the big centres. Both in the railway strike in Bengal and the textile strike in Bombay, the members of the WPP, have not only taken the most active part in organising strike action, but have also gained the enthusiastic confidence of the workers to the extent of being chosen by them as their leaders in preference to the bourgeois reformists who have up till now led the trade-union movement.

A conference is now being convoked where the existing

WPP's propose to form themselves into an all India Workers and Peasants Party.

The development of the left movement in the trade unions, which is opposed by the reformist leaders, has made a considerable advance in the last years. There is every reason to believe that the struggle against the reformists will become more intense in the very near future. In spite of numerous examples of heroic class solidarity among Indian workers during strikes, reformist leadership is still tolerated in the trade unions. The predominance of the reformists, who have taken the trade unions embracing now only 150,000 workers in all the organisations affiliated to it. During strikes reformist trade unionists openly play the role of strike-breakers, making common cause with the employers against the strikers. In all strike struggles the mass of the workers appoint from their midst an active body which forms the strike committee and leads the struggle. But real struggle against reformism has not properly started in the trade unions. There are signs that in connection with the development of the labour movement. the reformist leaders intend to adopt the course of expelling from the trade unions the real representatives of the working class, following the example and advice of the representatives of the British General Council who favoured India with their visit.

But if the reformist leaders in the Indian trade unions are identifying themselves more and more with the British reformist who are agents of imperialism, the consolidation of proletarian solidarity between the mass of the workers in India and the British working class is a fact characteristic of the new stage in the National revolutionary movement in India.

The class consciousness, good organisation and self-sacrificing spirit of the working class in India, manifest in the present strike struggle, which are directed against exploitation by British imperialism as well as by the Indian bourgeoisie, make one confident that the Indian proletariat has profited by the defeats of 1919-1921, has made the necessary deductions from the imperialist policy

in India of the MacDonald Labour Government in 1924, has correctly appreciated the role of the Indian bourgeoisie which has descended to the depths of a shameful capitulation before imperialism, and has understood, particularly in the last years, its tasks as the leader of a million strong peasantry, in the new stage of the revolution. This means that the proletariat of India will build up, and has already begun to do so, its Communist Party, whose leadership will guarantee victory.

Extract from the *Communist International—between the fifth and the sixth world conferences—1924-28*, report (up to May 1928) on the position in all sections of the World Communist Party. published by CPGB in July 1928, see section on India, pp 463-77

## II. THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT IN THE COLONIES

OTTO KUUSINEN  
(Excerpts)

### II. INDIA—THE CLASSICAL COLONIAL COUNTRY

I assume that many comrades in our parties and perhaps even a good many comrades here at our Congress are not much better informed about Indian conditions than I was a few weeks ago when the executive instructed me to report on this question. Therefore I will give with your permission, a few general facts concerning conditions in India, with the help of which I hope to bring India a little nearer to our parties. Relatively much has already been said about China. China has been popularised. But very little is known about India.

What is India? Is it a rich or a poor country? A petty bourgeois German writer who visited India lately, Bernhard Kellermann, has said that India is a beggar. This is a wrong description, but a far more wrong description is that of the imperialists who say that India is a wealthy

and well-developed country. Somewhere in *Capital Marx* reproduced a saying by a bourgeois economist that land is rich where the people is poor. In this sense India is truly rich. If one considers that India is one of the biggest consumers of gold, that for instance in 1925 it purchased half of the total gold production of the world and that all this is being accumulated there as treasure, one must admit that it is a wealthy country. But if one considers on the other hand that the annual national revenue per head of the population is estimated at only 38 rupees, that is to say that even in Japan it is three times higher, in Spain  $5\frac{1}{2}$  times, in Germany 15 times, and in Britain of course much higher still (25 times as high!), one gets an idea of the poverty in India. One gets a lopsided picture if one takes only the absolute figures about Indian export: what India has achieved in regard to various branches of production, that India occupies first place in the world in the production of rice and jute, second place in the production of cane-sugar, tea and cotton, and third place in the production of wheat, or if one hears about the truly rapid rate of the industrial development in India during the last decade. All this can give a semblance of truth to the assertion that India is one of the greatest industrial countries in the world. Everyone knows, for instance, that the International Labour Office of the League of Nations has "recognised" India as one of the 8 leading industrial countries of the world.

But this is not in keeping with the actual situation. If one was to carry this logic a little further, one would come to utterly absurd conclusions. The yearly military expenditure in India, including indirect military expenditure, is twice as high as that of imperialist Japan. India exports even capital to other countries. On the strength of this one might assert with a certain amount of justification that India is on the way to becoming an imperialist country. This is approximately how the situation is represented in the official reports of the British imperialists. According to these reports an enormous "material and moral progress" is taking place in India which is in full harmony

with the British imperialism. This is of course only an imperialist lie.

### *The Social Pyramid in India*

Comrades, picture to yourselves the social pyramid in India. It is not an industrial country, but rather a big rural continent. There are 686,000 villages—I do not know if all these villages, not to mention the peasants who live there, have ever been counted. These peasants, most of whom are something like the “poorest peasantry” in Russia, together with the 50-60 million Pariahs, constitute the broad lowest section of the social pyramid. On their shoulders rests in the rural districts a many-storeyed hierarchy of exploiters, up to the highest feudal landlords and princes. Finally, there is above the whole enormous population a relatively small group of white exploiters, approximately 103,000 adult white men, most of them Britishers, who in comparison with the Indian people are like a fly on the back of an elephant. To every white exploiter there are over 3000 Indians who are trodden underfoot by everyone of these whites.

Who are these whites? Most of them, approximately, 64,000 are officers, generals, soldiers, policemen, higher officials, businessmen, etc. The Indians call them sahibs, the great white masters. Kellermann relates for instance that once when he entered a town in his carriage he met native aristocrats on horseback who immediately dismounted when they saw him and made a wide detour. His driver explained that they thought him to be a Britisher and were afraid that he would strike them with his whip. The white sahib gets as much space in a railway train as 50-60 Indians, who pay together of course a much higher fare than he. Any Britisher in India has the right to refuse to appear before an Indian court. This is of course very convenient for white criminals who elude punishment. At the head of these white exploiters is their most dangerous idol, the viceroy. Of course he does not yet complete the pyramid. Behind him there are in London the secretary

of state for India, behind him the king and behind the king stands Lancashire and finally the group of the so-called "Big Five", the five biggest banks in Great Britain; this group is the sun of all the sahibs. This is the greatest pyramid in the world.

### *The British Gain*

The British imperialists rule over this big people of over 300 millions by various traditional methods, among which for instance the enforced and militarily protected consumption of opium, which has been lately competing with the consumption of alcohol and cocaine, must be mentioned. An even more effective method is that of creating strife between the various religions, above all between moslems and hindus.

All this means of course an enormous yearly gain for the British bourgeoisie. Comrade Varga has estimated this gain at 167 million pound sterling. This amount includes the profit from Great Britain's trade with India which is entirely in the hands of the British and the profit from sea transport which is carried on almost entirely by British ships, the industrial profit, the tribute for the British capital invested in India as well as the big administrative expenditure which the Indian people must meet in Britain as well as in India for the "good administration". The Indian writers Shah and Khambatha estimate this yearly British gain at 146,500,000 pound sterling, not a much lower estimate than that of comrade Varga. As an absolute sum it is very big; as part of the whole profit of the British bourgeoisie it is very considerable; in comparison with the number of the population it is not big, but in comparison with the annual revenue of the Indian people it is an enormous sum.

### *The Industrial Development of India and the British Colonial Policy*

Britain initiated its rule in India by prohibiting the native textile handicrafts. It was destroyed in a few



years by cruel penalties. The industrial development of the country was systematically impeded and was given a chance only at the beginning of this century. During and after the war industry, and especially the textile industry, developed rapidly. Relative figures are certainly even more considerable in few other branches of industry. For instance it has been ascertained that the number of workers employed in the metal industry increased by 100 per cent in ten years, and in the chemical industry by 130 per cent. But these branches of industry are still very weak, they are only beginning to develop. In the present industrial life of India the textile industry alone plays an important role.

As I have already said, the industrial development of India has progressed rapidly in the last 20 years. But if even several communist comrades have been induced, on the strength of this fact, to assume that British policy is following an entirely new course in regard to the industrial development in India, I must say that they have gone too far. A semblance of this was possible in the boom years 1921-23. Actually, no change has taken place in the course of the British colonial policy. Some of these comrades went even the length of holding out the prospect of a decolonisation of India by British imperialism. This was a dangerous term. The comrades who have represented and partly still represent this—in my opinion—false theory are comrades who otherwise deal very seriously with the problems of our movement—comrades Palme-Dutt, Roy and Rathbone. A certain relic of this wrong conception made its appearance even in comrade Rajan's speech in the discussion on the first item of the agenda. I consider it my duty to elucidate this question. If it were really true that British imperialism has adopted the course of the industrialisation of India which leads to its decolonisation, we would have to revise our entire conception of the character of the imperialist colonial policy. I think that facts show that this is not the case.

### *The Decolonisation Theory*

I will give you a few quotations from the works of these comrades. Comrade Palme Dutt writes as follows in his book *Modern India*:

“In the 19th century India was the most important outlet for the British manufacturers. In the 20th century India became rapidly industrialised under the control of British capital; by means of a colossal and irresponsible bureaucratic apparatus and owing to a semi-slave position of the workers, this capital has more profitable investment possibilities than at home.”

Another quotation:

“The industrialisation of India under British control—at present India is recognised officially as one of the eight leading industrial countries of the world—means that as the situation gets worse in Britain, British capital exercises its power over the cheap labour power in India and establishes here enterprises which, by their competition are to reduce wages in Britain.”

(Retranslated from the German)

In his theses at the II Congress, comrade Roy represented utterly different views. In these theses, which had been perused by Lenin, comrade Roy wrote at that time:

“Foreign imperialism which has been forced on the Eastern peoples has no doubt impeded their social and economic development and has deprived them of the possibility of reaching the stage of development which has been reached in Europe and America. Owing to the imperialist policy which endeavours to retard industrial development in the colonies the native proletariat has, in fact, begun only lately to exist.”

But comrade Roy holds different views now. In the draft resolution of October 1927 on the Indian question, comrade Roy makes the following statement:

“The new imperialist policy implies a gradual ‘decolonisation’ of India which must be allowed to take its course so that India might develop from a ‘Depend-

ency' into a 'Dominion'. The Indian bourgeoisie, instead of being kept down as a powerful rival, will be conceded participation in the economic development of the country under the hegemony of imperialism. From a backward agrarian colonial possession India will become a modern industrial country—'a member of the British Commonwealth of free nations'. India is in a state of 'decolonisation' in as far as the policy forced on the British imperialism through the capitalist post-war crisis has done away with the obsolete forms and methods of colonial exploitation in favour of new forms and new methods."

The description in comrade Roy's draft resolution goes on in the same strain. But I must point out to the comrades that comrade Roy has probably an inkling of the consequences of this theory. He says:

"This change in the economic sphere has also political consequences. The inevitable process of gradual decolonisation is fraught with the embryo of the dissolution of the empire. In fact, the new policy adopted for the consolidation of the empire, a policy which wants to ward off the danger of an immediate collapse, shows that the foundations of the empire have been shaken. Imperialism is a powerful demonstration of capitalist prosperity. In the present period of capitalist decline its basis is undermined."

Thus comrade Roy sees that the decolonisation policy of British imperialism would lead to the weakening and dissolution of the British empire. But he nevertheless believes that British imperialism is determined to pursue this policy. I will give you now a quotation from comrade Rathbone's article "The Industrialisation of India" where he uses a new argument:

"...In the war period British finance capital recognised the mistake which was made by preventing the industrial development of the colonies, for the latter were unable to supply the mother country with muni-

tions during the war... This was one of the main reasons for the industrialisation of the colonies.”

(All quotations retranslated from the German)

Now comrades, it is certainly very nice for the mother country if its colonies supply it during the war with munitions for war purposes. But if British imperialism should industrialise India for the purpose of getting munitions from it during the war, the danger will certainly arise that during the coming war these colonies might use these munitions first of all for the acceleration of their decolonisation. Engineering works, even if they be big, such as Tata in India, can be after all restricted in every possible way and controlled by British imperialism so as to prevent it becoming a danger. A few railway workshops, etc., can also be controlled, but comrades, the existence of a few such enterprises does not yet mean the industrialisation of India. Industrialisation means the transformation of an agrarian into an industrial country, it means general, thorough, industrial development, above all development of the production of means of production, of the engineering industry. This is not a question if any industrial development has taken place in India—this has certainly been the case—it is rather question if it is the policy of British imperialism to industrialise India.

### *What Do the Facts Show?*

It is true that after the war British imperialism has made a few more or less important economic concessions in favour of the industrial development in India. The most important among them were the 15 per cent protective tariffs for the cotton industry. But what is the explanation of these concessions? Comrades, to explain this one need not even visualise the needs and requirements of British imperialism in a future world war. It is sufficient to visualise the position of British imperialism and the situation in India itself at the beginning of the imperialist world war. Mutinies in the army, a big peasant insurrection in the Punjab, development of the national movement

of the bourgeoisie, for the first time, unification of the Moslem League with the Indian National Congress. Then there was also Japanese competition on the Indian market and partly also the competition of the United States,—both endeavoured to make use of the war period for the consolidation of their position on the Indian market. There was also the *Khilafat* movement, the Gandhi movement, etc. All this combined placed the British government before the alternative: either to lose India as a colony or to make certain concessions for the pacification of the Indian bourgeoisie and to take measures for protection against foreign competition. The necessity to do this dictated at that time to the British imperialism the economic concessions (raising the protective tariffs for the textile industry to 15 per cent) and also the constitutional reform of 1919. The objective consequence of the facilities for industrial production in India was an acceleration of industrial development. These concessions were in themselves small enough; there is hardly a capitalist country which has effected its transition from an agrarian to a capitalist state with such low protective tariffs, of course except Britain, which was the first to effect this transition, at the time when no other country exported manufactured articles. But even these small concessions are being gradually reduced all along the line.

It is said in circles which believe in the decolonisation theory that British finance capital is looking for productive investment possibilities in the Indian industry in order to utilise there the low wage rates, etc. Of course much British capital was exported to India also after the war. But in this connection we witness the following significant phenomena. After the war the export of British capital was at first, of course, very small, but in the three years 1921-23 it increased considerably. After that a sudden big change took place. In the last years preceding the war the export of British capital to India amounted approximately to 13-16 million pound sterling per annum; then as I already said, the export of capital was very small in the first years after the war; in 1921-23 it rose

to 25-30 and even 36 million pound sterling per annum; ie a fifth or a quarter of the entire export of British capital to India. After that the export of British to India fell again to 2 and subsequently to 3 million, and in the last year (1927) it amounted only to 0.8 million pound sterling—a very small sum. In the last years British capitalism was not particularly inclined to make excursions to India. It finds its way into South Africa, Australia and even the Sudan, but not to India. If one takes the trouble to investigate for what purposes the capital exported from Great Britain to India in the exceptional years, 1921-23, was invested one sees that most of it was certainly not invested for productive purposes, and by no means for industry. Of the whole amount (94,400,000 pound sterling) 70,000,000 pound sterling went to government loans. One can say that 10 per cent at the utmost of the British export capital was invested in India in industry during and after the war. Between 1913 and 1924 India's national debt increased by 4139 million rupees (mainly military). For instance, during the war the government of India simply made a present of 145 million pound sterling for British war purposes and maintained in addition considerable active armies on the various fronts of the world war. India fought entirely with its own means against Afghanistan and the independent tribes in Vasiristan. No wonder that up to 1925 the Indian state budget showed a big deficit.

If one considers the growth of capital, of the foreign joint stock companies (mainly British) in India, in the period between 1913-24, one must say that it was very considerable (452 million pound sterling, ie an almost treble increase), but most of these investments of capital went not to industry, but above all to banks, insurance and trading companies (405 million pound sterling). On the other hand, a much greater share of the increased capital of joint stock companies registered in India, in which probably more Indian than British capital is invested, went to industry: out of 1900 million rupees over one thousand million.

After the war native capital has gained ground in India

in various spheres where prior to the war British capital had almost a monopoly (the jute industry and tea plantations). In the same period Britain's share in Indian import has considerably decreased: from 64 per cent prior to the war to 47.8 per cent in 1926-27 (in 1913-14 English imports to India amounted to 1176 million rupees, in 1924-25, calculated according to prewar prices, only to 720 million rupees). The main cause of this is probably the development of the Indian industry itself, but on the other hand, also the development of competition on the part of Japan, the United States, Italy, Belgium and Germany. It is but natural that British imperialism is not inclined to be to passive spectator of this trend of development. Thus we witness lately various counter-measures on its part against the industrialisation tendencies of India. I draw your attention for instance to the currency policy of the British government, to the artificial rise of the rate of the rupee to 1/6 d. (instead of 1/4 d.), which in practice means a premium of 12½ per cent for import. This means in fact that the existing protective tariffs lose a great deal of their value. The Indian bourgeoisie has been already a long time demanding the introduction of the gold standard. But the British bourgeoisie will not hear of it. Preferential tariffs for British goods are being introduced. Any demand which aims at the establishment of a real state bank in India is violently opposed by the British government. Orders for railway carriages have been going lately again to Britain. The "big five" in London consider now all economic concessions to India rather risky. They carry on an aggressive economic policy against Indian industrialisation. Among these counter-measures was also the despatch of the Simon commission to India which certainly did not aim at the decolonisation of India but rather at the consolidation of the colonial regime.

Comrades, I of course do not mean to assert that we are face to face with a complete throttling of industrial development in India by the British imperialists. Even if it wanted to try this, it would not be possible. The in-

dustrial development of India will continue, although probably very slowly. But the further it gets the more it comes into conflict with the most important colonial interests of British imperialism. The latter stands in need of the Indian market more than ever before. Its own economic position demands peremptorily an increased exploitation of India, but it cannot achieve this without calling forth on its own part an accentuated conflict with the interests of the industrial development of India.

### *The Question of the Extension of the Internal Market*

Comrade Roy says that the Indian bourgeoisie will be granted "participation" in the economic power together with the British imperialists. There is no doubt that efforts are made towards a compromise between them. The British as well as the Indian bourgeoisie is endeavouring to arrive at a durable compromise. But the question is if this big durable compromise can be achieved or not. Various agreements between them are quite possible in certain spheres, but they will be provisional and partial. Such an agreement has been, for instance, effected between the Lancashire and Bombay cotton manufacturers: the latter are to produce only the coarser and the former only the finer qualities.

But is this kind of thing possible all along the line? Certainly not. Comrades, it would be perhaps possible only in one case: if the internal market in India were to extend at a rapid rate. In such a case exploitation by the Indian bourgeoisie and also by British imperialism could for a time develop in India parallel and to a certain extent without friction. But even in this case a subsequent collision between the forces of the independent development of India and the British imperialism could not be avoided. But by such agreements this collision could be certainly postponed for a certain period. But facts show that the internal Indian market is not extending. It remains stationary, and even a partial shrinkage of the internal market is noticeable. For instance, the consumption



of cotton goods has decreased compared with the pre-war period. As the Indian textile industry has at the same time developed, this could only happen by the British competition being partly driven back. The internal market is too narrow for the two.

Therefore the problem of the development of the internal market in India is just as important for the British as for the Indian bourgeoisie. But can this problem be solved?

What constitutes the internal market in India? Mainly the rural districts. In this respect the peasantry is of decisive importance. Potentially, the Indian peasantry constitutes a powerful factor of the internal market, but in reality its purchasing capacity is infinitesimal owing to the three-fold exploitation under which it is groaning. By British imperialism and its tax collectors, by the landlords and by trade and usurious capital. As pointed out by comrade Bukharin when dealing with the first item on the agenda, industry in India is unable to absorb the mass of the pauperised peasants, and instead of proletarianisation we witness there an ever-increasing process of pauperisation in the rural districts.

### *The Position of the Indian Peasantry*

Without attempting to place before you the entire Indian agrarian question or to describe the peculiar conditions in the various districts, I must nevertheless mention the most important points in regard to the Indian rural districts, so as to make it clear why the necessary extension of the internal market meets with insurmountable obstacles in India.

Thanks to British imperialism, which is the biggest landowner in the country, the former village communes and democratic peasant constitution "Panchayat" were destroyed. But instead of getting rid of the former feudal landlords, a new feudalism was created on a big scale. The biggest section of the present landowners and big tenant farmers, the "Zamindars" (there are about one

million zamindars, 8 million including their families), the main social support of the British bourgeoisie in India, is to all intents and purposes a class which has come into being through the measures of British imperialism. These rentiers live themselves in the cities. Agriculture on a big scale hardly exists. Between the feudal rajas, the new feudal zamindars on the one hand and the Indian peasants on the other hand, there is a whole hierarchy of sub-tenants who exploit the peasants. There are frequently 10-12 storeys (in exceptional cases even more) of such intermediate exploiters between the landlord and the poor tiller of the land. If the peasant cannot pay his taxes or ground rent he becomes the victim of usurers. About one half of the Indian peasantry is very much in debt. There are cases when the usurer exacts most of the peasants' harvest. According to the official government report, in some parts of India no less than 6 million hereditary debt-slaves were discovered in 1918—such discoveries can only be made in India. It has been calculated that rent and interest on the debts amounts on an average to over 70 per cent of the peasants' harvest. I cannot vouch for the correctness of this calculation. I mention it only as an illustration of the terrible exploitation of the Indian countryside. Owing to the enormously high land value, in many parts of India parcellation of the land has assumed enormous proportions. It is but natural that under such conditions the productivity of labour of the peasantry cannot develop. The best part of the year peasants are unemployed or partly employed. The returns of their harvest are very low (wheat returns per hectare only one half of the returns in Japan and one-third of the returns in Germany. In 1926 rice per hectare only one-third of the returns in Japan). The total harvest returns have not increased since 1900.

Of course under such conditions the purchasing capacity of the peasants is infinitesimal and their consumption very small. Since the war the differences between the prices of agricultural produce and industrial produce is even more unfavourable for the peasants.

Very competent writers assert that there are over 100 million people among the Indian peasant population who cannot satisfy their hunger even once a year. The death rate in India is the highest in the world (almost three times as high as in Britain). The direct or indirect chief cause of this high death rate is starvation and destitution, which of course helps to spread epidemics (especially typhus).

### *Agrarian Reform or Agrarian Revolution?*

What would, under such circumstances, be the premise for the required extension of the internal market? An agrarian reform on a large scale? Is this possible in India? When the British government carried out an agrarian reform in Ireland, it purchased there those parts of the land where parcelling was greatest. But in India the ground is parcelled out to the utmost almost everywhere. There is no land fund on the basis of which one could carry out a land reform on a large scale. Politically, it is impossible for British imperialism to confiscate the land of the big landlords. Artificial irrigation by which the arabel area could be extended—being in the hands of the government—is firstly utterly inadequate and secondly—being in the form of capitalist enterprises—is so expensive that the average peasant cannot utilise it.

An attempt was made in the Bombay presidency to fix the minimum ground rent for small peasants. But this reform had to be withdrawn because one did not know on what the destitute peasants were to live. To carry out the necessary agrarian reform in India by bourgeois methods, one would have to drive not only millions but several tens of millions peasants from the country somewhere. Thus, an effective agrarian reform is impossible in India.

The whole development shows that not decolonisation not agrarian reform, but agrarian revolution is in the course of formation. During the world war peasants from the Punjab and some other parts of India were sent as soldiers to the various fronts. There were altogether one

million Indian soldiers at the European war fronts to fight against the white-sahib, although not the British sahib. Every tenth man of them remained at the front, but nine-tenths have returned with the knowledge that the white sahib is vulnerable... When this knowledge has spread throughout the Indian villages and when Indian soldiers and also their circles realise that they were donkeys not to have turned their arms first and foremost against their own oppressors, the time for the agrarian revolution in India will have come.

### *Why Does the Indian Bourgeoisie Raise a Hue and Cry?*

It is no wonder that in the face of this situation the Indian bourgeoisie is sounding the alarm. Pressure from below makes the bourgeoisie indulge in oppositional gestures: the legislative council has decided—of course against the votes of the British and of a few moslem nobles—to boycott the Simon commission. The Indian National Congress has decided to declare that “the aim of the Indian people is full national independence”. When I am told that this is only on paper, that the people are only making a noise, that they are only indulging in “Moonshine politics”, I say: quite so, but even behind moonshine one can discover a hard fact, namely, the moon itself. The hue and cry of the Indian bourgeoisie is a sign that something serious and important is maturing behind it.

There is an economic crisis at present almost in all the spheres of production in India, and by no means for lack of capital, for there is an abundance of capital in India. With the help of the British imperialists, the Indian capitalists endeavour to get rid of their superabundance of capital. They buy up state bonds and shares (but much more bonds than shares of industrial companies), they deposit their money in savings banks, they export capital to Brazil as recommended by the British chancellor of the exchequer in India, they purchase enormous quantities of gold and silver as treasure, etc. Why is not most of this Indian capital invested in industry? Because the British

colonial system is an enormous obstacle to the industrialisation of India. For this reason most of the engineering works established after the war have gone into liquidation in the last few years. And yet there are comrades as for instance, comrade Luhani, who gives a poetical description of the prospects of the industrialisation and decolonisation of India on the strength of the fact that India has even obtained diplomatic representation somewhere in the South African government. Comrade Luhani shows his inability to distinguish the most important and substantial from the unsubstantial. The big revolutionary crisis, the maturing of which we are witnessing now in India, is the most important. The pauperisation of the peasantry, the retardation of the development of the native industry with the result that it cannot absorb the mass of the pauperised peasants, that peasants who migrated to the cities are returning to the villages—all these are important and very characteristic facts in illustrating the development of India.

### *National Reformism*

That the national bourgeoisie is raising a hue and cry is quite true. But it is important to understand the political character of the Indian bourgeoisie, its national reformist policy. That this policy is directed against the proletariat is as plain as that the bourgeoisie is the bourgeoisie. That the policy of the Indian bourgeoisie is not revolutionary, is also quite clear. I will refer only to a couple of very characteristic examples. In 1922, during the first wave of the semi-revolutionary workers and peasants movement, when the bourgeoisie began to be afraid of revolution because of its property, the executive of the Indian National Congress capitulated immediately before imperialism. It adopted at that time the following resolution:

“The executive committee regrets the brutal behaviour of the crowd in Taschauri-Tschaure which mur-

dered the policemen and burned down in its senseless fury the police station", etc. etc.

The other points of this notorious resolution are in the same spirit. The chief organ of the national-reformist Swaraj Party *Forward* wrote once as follows in regard to the accentuation of the British-Soviet antagonism:

"Indian statesmen should ask the British statesmen if they intend to pay for Indian help in questions of international politics."

It was with such cynicism this organ announced the bourgeois-bargaining with British imperialism in order to secure certain concessions as the price for support of British imperialism against the Russian revolution. I am not asserting that this is the subjective opinion of all swarajists, but I say that this is symptomatic for the main national reformist tendency, the oppositional bourgeoisie in India and in the colonies in general. Of course, in this connection one must not forget that the objective conditions of the national-revolutionary movement do not depend on the subjective will of the bourgeoisie. The national bourgeoisie is, of course, also aiming at unlimited rule; it wants, so to speak, to achieve power like a thief. However its opposition has in the present epoch a certain objective importance for the unchaining of the mass movement. More important still is a correct understanding of the importance which bourgeois leadership still has in India owing to the national-reformist deterioration of the mass movement. For the time being its importance is far greater in India than in China. One cannot simply deny the fact that the national-reformist parties have the greatest influence over the masses in India, not so much among the workers but certainly among the petty bourgeoisie and the peasantry. To undermine this influence, to overcome it, to get away the masses from the national reformists and the treacherous bourgeois opposition, such is our most important immediate task. It is more important to lay stress on this task than to talk about any diplomatic con-

quests of the Indian bourgeoisie or any unsubstantial facts which seem to bear out the decolonisation theory.

*Through What Forces Will the Real Liberation of India Be Achieved?*

It is also very important to understand correctly the role of the urban petty bourgeoisie and intelligentsia. If one observes for instance the obvious alarm with which the British imperialists are watching the enormous unemployment among the petty bourgeois intelligentsia in India, one cannot dispute the possibility that in this stage of the revolutionary movement in India not only the peasantry but also the urban petty bourgeoisie, and to a considerable extent the petty bourgeois intelligentsia can play an important role in the national movement. Of considerable importance are also the present big industrial strikes in India. They are semi-revolutionary symptoms of the accentuation of the situation, of the imminence of a revolutionary crisis in India. I will deal later on a little more fully with the conditions of the labour movement in India. India is not like any other colony. The importance of its enormous population and the gigantic resources which the Indian people has in all spheres provided it can develop freely, carry an enormous weight in regard to the intensification of the revolutionary crisis. The industrial development of India is only in its initial stage. But it conjures up forces which can no longer be stayed by British imperialism. The policy of the latter consists in preventing this development by impeding the industrialisation of India. But the economic and social forces which are to free India from the British yoke, will nevertheless continue to develop, although at a very slow rate.

Above all the Indian proletariat will continue to develop. And if any of the Indian comrades have doubts as to the anti-industrialisation tendency of the British policy in India, I would like them to make up their minds on this question once and for all. It depends a great deal on this if the immediate main task of the Communist Party in

India is correctly understood, namely, the task of relieving, by communist agitation, the mass of the Indian peasantry and the proletariat of the illusion that the policy of British imperialism can make the decolonisation of India a reality, or can even bring it nearer. This will of course not be the case. Every Indian worker must realise that the British sahib is a robber and will never carry out the decolonisation of India. The liberation of India is a mission for which history has destined the Indian proletariat and peasantry. The Communist Party of India is to play the leading role in this struggle, and its foremost task in the preparation of this liberation struggle is—to disperse any illusion in regard to decolonisation through imperialism, to expose and combat any illusions of this kind spread by the responsivists, swarajists and others before the eyes of the masses. In this manner it will be able to do justice to its present task.

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### III. INDIA'S PART IN WORLD REVOLUTION

CLEMENS DUTT

#### 1. INDIA'S PART IN THE WORLD REVOLUTION

The importance of the role played by the colonial countries in the world proletarian revolution was clearly stated by Lenin and is formulated in the theses of the *Communist International*. The world-shaking events of the Chinese revolution have afforded a practical demonstration of the correctness of these theses and enable us through an analysis of these experiences to extend, to amplify and to make more concrete the conclusion's already obtained. Next to China, India is the most important colonial country in the world. Taken together, these two countries will play a dominant part in the fate of world imperialism.



Hence it is hardly necessary to emphasise the importance of studying to the fullest possible extent the problems presented by the developing situation in India and of applying the lessons derived from our experience in China.

It is true that there can be no mechanical transference of the conclusions arrived at a result of the experience in China. India has its own problems and its own special characteristics. The complete domination by one imperialist power to the exclusion of the others, the single centralised government, the different social institutions such as the caste system, the part played by the different races, particularly hindoos and mohammedans, all these things distinguish the Indian problem from that of China. In certain, wide outstanding features, nevertheless, the national-colonial revolution in India presents the same problems as in China and the development and experience of the one plays its part in affecting the developing and experience of the other. What has happened in China has given a great impetus to the movement for national emancipation in India, an impetus which is still growing and has not yet reached its climax.

The Indian revolution develops as part of the world proletarian revolution and is profoundly influenced by the general world situation. At the same time, as in the case of China, it plays a role which will be of decisive importance for the future of the revolution in the rest of the world. Recent events indicate that India is on the eve of a new phase of mass national struggle. Moreover it is already clear that this struggle will bear a different character from the abortive revolution of 1921. The new revolutionary upheaval will take place under the leadership of the revolutionary masses and will lead to the possibility of the establishment of a revolutionary government of the workers and peasants. This possibility brings more than ever to the forefront the question, already raised in the Chinese revolution, of the possibility of transition from the national revolution to the social revolution without a long intervening period of capitalist development.

## 2. THE ECONOMIC POSITION OF INDIA AND THE POLICY OF BRITISH IMPERIALISM

The outstanding feature of the recent policy of British imperialism in India is its aggressive character. "The policy of concessions has given place to the policy of the mailed-fist, to forcible demonstration of the supremacy of the British power.

In examining the economic background for this policy, it should be noted first that in spite of the shocks occasioned by the war and post-war crises, British imperialism has been successful in maintaining all key positions of control in its hands. There has been no decolonisation of India. India remains a classic example of a colonial country exploited to the full by foreign imperialism. Especially the monopolist hold over currency, banking and finance generally and over foreign trade, with predominance in industrial production and the direction of internal trade, serve to secure the position registered politically in subordination to the British parliament and control from the India office in London.

British imperialism has been successful in achieving a temporary stabilisation of its power in India. But it remains to be examined what are the prospects for the continuance of this stabilisation. The new situation arising with the war was met by a fundamental change of policy on the part of the British bourgeoisie. The central feature of the new policy was the industrialisation of India under the control of British finance capital. At the same time political reforms were introduced enfranchising and giving a semblance of power to the upper propertied section of the Indian bourgeoisie.

The work of the Industrial commission set up in 1916, furthered by the introduction of a protective tariff system laid the foundations for industrialisation. Nevertheless, the new economic policy met with redoubtable obstacles which have made necessary a modification if not a definite alteration of the original course. In the first place it was difficult to grant concessions to the Indian bourgeoisie which would not react to the detriment of British capitalism, and

the value of India as a market for British manufactured goods. Especially in the critical period after the general strike, British industry could not afford to allow the Indian market to be curtailed. Secondly the severe protracted crisis of British capitalism in the home country, reaching its climax in the period immediately following the general strike, put great difficulties in the way of providing the necessary means for the carrying out of industrialisation in India. In the slump following the post-war boom, the immature Indian industries faced with intense foreign competition, suffered severely. Further, the existing state of Indian economy was not adequate for intensive industrialisation and for exploitation by British finance capital under the new conditions of British imperialism. In particular, there was necessary a thorough-going overhauling of the financial system and the adoption of measures to increase agricultural production and the buying capacity of the peasants.

All these have combined to bring about a modification of the policy of promoting industrialisation with concessions to the Indian bourgeoisie. In the first place, steps were taken to remodel the currency and banking system. The fixing of the rupee exchange at the higher ratio of one shilling and six pence instead of one shilling and four pence, in the teeth of the opposition of Indian industrial interests, brought about a deflation crisis comparable to that occurring in England. The bitter fight between the British and Indian bourgeoisie over the Central Reserve Bank scheme is sufficient proof that the scheme is intended to serve the interests of British finance-capital at whatever cost in antagonising the Indian bourgeoisie.

A clear indication of the new attitude towards industrialisation, with refusal of concessions to Indian capitalists, is seen in relation to the tariff question. The recommendations of the special Textile Tariff board have been ignored. The Indian demand for protection for the glass and chemical industries, largely in Indian hands, has not even received the consideration of the Tariff board. At the same time a special amendment of the Steel Protection

act was hastily passed last March granting a protective duty against the import of steel railway wagons, and at the instance of the Burma Oil company (British concern), after propoganda against the import of Russian oil, the question of protection for Indian petroleum has been immediately referred to the Tariff board. Again, in 1924, the Tariff board recommended a protective duty on imported wire and wire nails. Since then the chief factory in India, the Wire Products company, changed hands, being acquired by Indian interests and now the Tariff board has withdrawn the protection granted in 1924.

This policy of promoting only such industries that are securely in British hands, or essential for war needs, and in any case acting so as not to damage British capitalist interests, became marked on the introduction of preferential duty for British steel in March 1927. Owing to the causes mentioned above, there has undoubtedly been a check in the process of industrialisation. It is necessary to examine how far this check implies a deliberate reversal of the previous policy and what are the prospectives of its being removed in the near future. The heavy drop in British capital exports to India, even as a proportion of the total capital exports, indicates that British capitalists are deliberately refraining from making investments in India. The stagnation of the industrial departments of the provincial governments in India shows that the British government has suspended the rapid developments anticipated by the report of the Industrial commission. On the other hand all attention is being rivetted on carrying through the new financial reforms which are intended to make India safe for British investment. The deflation crisis is accompanied by severe industrial depression. The Indian bourgeoisie is bitterly antagonistic to the present financial policy. In April 1928, the president of the Indian Chamber of Commerce declared that the "present situation is all right for the government, but all wrong as far as the interests of Indian trade and industry are concerned".

It is clear that not only is there a halt in the process of

industrialising India through British capital, but the Indian bourgeoisie also are being definitely discouraged from investing their capital in Indian industries. It is significant that Sir Basil Blackett, who has been in charge of Indian finances during the last five years, at a farewell dinner given to him by the European association last March, expressed the wish to see more Indian capital invested abroad. He announced that a considerable sum had recently been invested in Brazilian bonds from Bombay and he considered this "a development of extraordinary importance for India", for nothing would do more to promote racial equality between British and Indians than the "consciousness among Indian capitalists that they are the creditors of European and other debtors".

"It is, however, not necessary to conclude that the policy of industrialisation has been abandoned." It may be noted, in passing, that in spite of the general industrial depression, the production of iron and steel in India is still rapidly expanding. It is necessary to look beyond the present deflation crisis to the period when, as in England after deflation, on the new financial basis there will be a renewed outburst of capitalist activity and a renewed impetus to British investment in India and the development of nominally Indian industries. It is in expectation of this period that British imperialism is content to meet with unyielding resistance the economic and political demands of the Indian bourgeoisie. It would be natural to expect that, in the present period of considerable economic difficulties in India, British imperialism would be prepared to make some show of political concessions in order to conciliate at least a section of the Indian bourgeoisie. On the contrary, British imperialism is refusing to give way even in small matters and clearly expects to wear down the Indian resistance in the course of time. In this calculation it is probably looking to the development of a more favourable economic situation when the new financial measures shall have been carried into effect.

### 3. THE AGRARIAN PROBLEM

In estimating the possibility of the development of a revolutionary situation in India, the agrarian question will naturally play a very big part. The agrarian problem is created by the penetration of capitalism into agriculture, coming into conflict with feudal elements in village economy, intensifying exploitation and upsetting the previous character of agricultural production and the relations of the classes engaged in it. The progressive undermining of the basis of Indian agriculture is seen, firstly, in the stagnation as regards production, secondly, in the pauperisation and proletarianisation of the peasants together with minute fragmentation of land holdings and the accumulation of a gigantic burden of debts, and thirdly, in the resulting development of revolutionary unrest among the peasants.

The situation has been sufficiently alarming to British imperialism to cause them to send out a special Royal commission on agriculture. The latter has been at work for two years and the nature of its conclusions is now fairly easily estimated. Since it was specifically precluded from dealing with the root questions of land ownership, it can safely be said that its results will be insignificant as far as the main social problems giving rise to the agricultural revolution are concerned. The proposals of British imperialism to meet the developing agricultural crisis are of two kinds, agricultural and organisational. The first includes schemes for the development and rationalisation of agriculture so as directly to increase the volume of production. The second includes proposals for consolidation of holdings, on the lines of the recent bill in the Bombay legislative council, which will involve the buying out and proletarianisation of peasants cultivating uneconomic holdings and organisational measures such as the development of cooperation and improved methods of marketing produce.

None of these things will affect the root problems. Nor can the situation be met by the reactionary proposals of

the Indian petty bourgeoisie who advocate the return to pre-capitalist forms in their propaganda of the "charka" (hand spinning wheel) and of so-called "village reconstruction". The perspective of inevitable agricultural revolution remains and it is not too much to say that the agricultural revolution will be the central axis of the coming mass national revolutionary upheaval.

At the present time, however, although the agrarian problem becomes increasingly more acute, there is as yet no such mass rebellion among the peasants as marked the period immediately following the war. It is true that even now mass movements among the peasants are occurring, as for instance, the resistance to increased land taxation among the Bombay peasantry, the peasant movement of the Akali sikhs in the Punjab, and peasant revolts among even some of the most backward peasants of the native states and in Rajputana; but these are not on the same scale as those of previous years. By comparison with the rising ferment among the industrial workers, the peasant movement is at present quiescent. Undoubtedly there are here a number of factors which have to be taken into account. In the first place, the last five years have on the whole been years of comparatively good harvests. In the second place, it should be remembered that the revolutionary wave among the peasants after the world war took place in circumstances of an unprecedented increase in prices, while under the present deflation policy prices are actually falling. In the case of the industrial workers, this is counter-balanced by the capitalist offensive against wage standards, but the peasants are not so immediately affected. Further, the betrayal of Gandhism disrupted the peasant movement. Nevertheless, the signs of a rising movement are present and with only a slight sharpening of the crisis, and if ideological leadership is provided, the peasant revolution may expand to gigantic dimensions.

#### 4. THE RISE OF NEW FORCES IN THE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT AND THE ROLE OF THE INDIAN BOURGEOISIE

The last year has been one of marked revival, especially during the last few months, in regard to the national struggle against imperialism. What is the basis and nature of this revival and what light does it throw on the relations of the classes in the impending revolutionary clash?

In 1921, the national struggle took on the appearance of a gigantic mass movement, but it presented certain features which sharply distinguish it from the growing movement of today. In 1921, the central role in the movement was played by the Indian bourgeoisie. There was no party representing the independent interests of the toilers, and the movement took place definitely under bourgeois domination and leadership. Even at the climax, the bourgeoisie retained full control as can be judged from the immediate and general obedience to the veto on the movement imposed by the Indian bourgeoisie at Bardoli in 1922. Further movement in 1921 took place during the period characterised internationally by the post-war collapse of the revolutionary tempo. The Bardoli surrender was nearly a year later than the Black Friday betrayal in England.

Since 1921 there has been a period of rapid class differentiation. The Indian bourgeoisie have abandoned the revolutionary national struggle. Their petty-bourgeois agent, Gandhi, has been completely discredited. The pauperisation of the petty-bourgeoisie has gone further and further. The government itself is compelled to make an investigation into the causes of "middle class" unemployment. The working class has grown stronger and more capable of leading an independent political struggle. Internationally, the new struggle is developing in a period of preparations for a new imperialist war, and after the experience of the revolutionary struggle in China and of the betrayal of the revolution by the Chinese bourgeoisie.

Thus the revival of the national movement takes place under changed circumstances. The new movement that is



now gathering strength is of a different character to the old one. Its development is also proceeding more slowly than in the post-war period, but this is compensated for by the more fundamental nature of its social basis.

The basis of the new movement which distinguishes it from the old is the conscious union of a struggle for national emancipation, centred on the fight against imperialism, on the one hand, with the social-economic struggle of the masses against exploitation on the other. This was only partially and then unconsciously and instinctively expressed in the mass movement of 1921. The grounds for the new revival must be looked for in the causes underlying the development of this twofold struggle. Briefly formulated, the most important of these are: (1) the strengthening of the proletariat and its schooling in the class struggle as a result of industrialisation and increased exploitation; (2) the impoverishment and revolutionisation of wide strata of the petty bourgeoisie and peasantry; (3) the development of the international working-class struggle against capitalism and imperialism; and (4) the repercussion of the establishment of workingclass power in the USSR and of the events in China.

It is necessary also to examine the role played by the Indian bourgeoisie in the new movement. An exact estimate is made difficult owing to the operation of several contradictory factors. On the one hand, the demands of the Indian bourgeoisie cannot be satisfied under the conditions of the domination of British imperialism. On the other hand, the bourgeoisie cannot participate in a movement directed towards the overthrow of social exploitation. "The whole experience of the action of the Indian bourgeoisie, and of their counterparts in China goes to show that their opposition to the working class is more fundamental than their opposition to foreign imperialism." Not only is it impossible for the Indian bourgeoisie to play a central role in the new movement, but it is demonstrable(?) that their role is a counter-revolutionary one. Nevertheless, particularly under the conditions of the pre-

sent aggressive drive of British imperialism, the antagonism between the British and the Indian bourgeoisie is by no means liquidated. The check to the policy of industrialisation and economic and political concessions does not convert the Indian bourgeoisie into a revolutionary force but it does involve them in an opposition to British imperialism which must be taken into account in characterising the conditions for the development of the mass revolutionary struggle.

The significance of the boycott movement in reply to the Simon commission, of the anti-imperialist decisions of the Indian National Congress, and of the series of defeats inflicted on the government in the legislatures must be judged from this standpoint, as also from the reciprocal standpoint of their meaning as a barometer of the general leftward pressure from outside the ranks of the bourgeoisie. At the same time that the National Congress at Madras adopted a series of "left" decisions, including the demand for complete national independence and support for the League against Imperialism, it received back into its ranks prominent representatives of the reactionary right wing of the nationalist movement. The move towards unity of all the parties of the Indian bourgeoisie involves the rejection of revolutionary struggle and is in itself sufficient to explain the collapse of the hartal and boycott policy advocated at the Madras Congress.

The rise of new forces in the nationalist movement is seen most clearly in the rapid growth in importance of the Workers and Peasants Party. Originally deriving its composition mainly from the petty bourgeois left groups in the nationalist Congress ranks, this party has lacked a mass basis and a clear independent line; but that it is in accord with the new mass national revolutionary impetus is seen in its success as actual leaders of mass activity, both political and economic. The Workers and Peasants Party has proved the strongest where it has come out most independently as the leader of strike struggles and anti-imperialist demonstrations. It represents the begin-

ning of a mass national revolutionary party based on the leadership of the proletariat in the national struggle.

##### 5. THE FORWARD MOVEMENT OF THE PROLETARIAT

The outstanding feature of the present movement in India is the rising wave of strike actions on the part of the industrial workers. This strike wave was slowly developing during 1927, but during the latter part of the year its importance was overshadowed by the attention concentrated on the nationalist campaign against the Simon commission. Already the bourgeois nationalist campaign has dwindled to small proportions, but the strike movement has continued to grow until it has forced itself into the forefront of attention.

The immediate occasion of the strike movement has evoked a continued capitalist offensive and the attempted carrying through of rationalisation proposals. The railway strikes in the Bengal Nagpur railway last year and on the East Indian railway this year arose on the issue of reorganisation and retrenchment proposals involving largescale dismissals. The general strike in Bombay was provoked by the introduction of speeding-up methods. In many cases, partly as a result of the one and six penny rupee, further wage cuts have been introduced following on wage reductions carried out during the last few years. The working class has emerged from the depression of the defeats experienced in 1922-25 and is now coming out in mass resistance to the capitalist attacks. Further, in looking for the immediate causes of the present movement, account must be taken of the influence of the news about the Chinese revolution.

The present strike movement displays several notable characteristics. In the first place it is very widespread, strikes taking place in all parts of India. Secondly, the strikes are of mass character, all workers whether organised or not taking part, and very frequently being assisted by sympathetic strikes among workers not immediately affected. This is seen also in the persistent threats of a

general strike, as in the case of the Madras strikes last year where the Madras workers as a whole threatened to come out in support of the strikers of the Burma Oil company, etc., and in the threats of a general strike on all the Indian railways. Thirdly, it is very conspicuous that the official trade-union organisations play no part in calling or leading strikes, but even betray them openly. The official report of the executive committee of the All-Indian Trade Union Congress, made to the Kanpur session in November 1927, announces that no strike had been sanctioned by the executive of the AITUC during the past year, but that, nevertheless, certain strikes took place "in which the officials of the Congress had to interest themselves".

The trade union leaders openly sabotaged and helped to crush the strikes that have occurred, and are actively supporting the proposals for introduction of schemes for industrial arbitration.

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#### IV. DEVELOPMENTS IN THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN INDIA

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##### 1. THE PROCESS OF RELATIVE "DE-COLONISATION"

As a result of the operation of world economic forces since the conclusion of the last imperialist war, profound changes were initiated in the relations between the subject countries of the east and the imperialist powers. These initial changes may now be described as having reached the stage of adult maturity, and as beginning to function

as autonomous factors in the world situation. In any case, they have gained enormously in sharpness of outline and lend themselves at the present moment to a precise formulation in terms of practical politics.

We have to note one set of these changes in the case of the relations between England and the colony of India. These changes cumulatively constitute a big factor in the present international situation, though they have not had the advertisement which similar developments in China have had by reason of a nationwide revolution.

### *Two Factors of Change*

There are two factors to be noted as operating these changes, namely, the decline of capitalism in England and the development of capitalism in India. The capitalist decline in England is a process induced, first, by organic defects and accelerated secondly by external factors among which the capitalist development of India plays, till now, a very minor role. On the other hand, capitalism in India, once started as a historical process in the evolution of productive forces, finds in the simultaneous process of capitalist decline in England at once a stimulus and a terrain for further development.

It is to be noted that the processes in England and India are parallel and counteracting. The result of their parallelism and counteraction is a third and distinct process namely, the relative "de-colonisation" of India. It is a new and startling phenomenon in the history of colonial countries. Its implications must be thoroughly grasped for an objective appreciation of that radical redistribution of revolutionary forces which strikes the eye as the most far-reaching of transformations that have taken place in India in recent years.

It is necessary to emphasise that the "de-colonisation" of India is primarily the function of the decline of capitalism in England; it is only secondarily the function of the development of capitalism in India. The process in which India is shedding the hitherto-accepted character-

istics of a colony has been induced by the weakness of British imperialism and not by the strength of the Indian bourgeoisie. Though, by now, the Indian bourgeoisie has become quite strong, and its position relative to the imperial authority becomes visible stronger, as the present political struggle proceeds. But the fact of the initial momentum towards "de-colonisation" having come from the British process of capitalist decline, has an important bearing. It explains much that is otherwise inexplicable in the recent rapid rise of the Indian bourgeoisie. It explains the persistently non-revolutionary character of the struggle by which that rise has been registered as a political fact.

The period is long past when India was, for the purposes of British capitalism, merely a reservoir of raw materials and a dumping-ground for the products of British industry. That was the period of classical colonisation which now survives only in the more backward African and Asiatic possessions of England and France. It was succeeded in India by the period of export of finance capital from England to assist in the realisation of the official policy (projected in 1916) of British imperialism to industrialise India.

We are, at the present moment, witnessing the change from the period of export of finance capital to a new period. In this new period, finance capital is still being exported, but its export is being increasingly subjected to the restrictive and competitive influence of other powerful factors. These latter are operating in the direction of progressively weakening the grip of British capitalism on the economy of India and thus laying the economic foundation of what we term the "de-colonising" process.

### *The Three Phases*

A study of the situation yields us three phases.

First, the export of finance capital from England is becoming increasingly precarious, because of the instability of its source. The export of British finance capital to India

does not now proceed from the surplus of a prosperous capitalist system at home. The British capitalist system, organically affected in the basic industries, is hemmed in by powerful competition from continental and American sources. This, by the way, found its expression in the fact that J. M. Keynes, the wellknown English economist, has been asking for an official embargo on the export of capital from England.

Secondly, an increasing part of British capital invested in India is not exported from England. It is local capital accumulated by British firms operating in India, and invested by them—in denominations, not of British, but Indian, currency—in Indian enterprises. The gestation of this capital has given birth to a local British bourgeoisie domiciled in India for commercial purposes, putting itself sometimes in opposition to finance capital of the metropolis and feeling in some cases a certain community of interests—in spite of the famous Anglo-Saxon scruple about the colour of the skin—with the Indian bourgeoisie.

Thirdly, we have to note the most important fact of the rise of a powerful native capitalist class in India and its determined and sustained attempt to secure an ever bigger partnership with exported British finance capital in the capitalist development of the productive forces of India.

Exact and well-substantiated figures are not available to determine the economic strength of the Indian capitalist class. But we can lay our hands on some data which go to establish that this class is stronger than is generally supposed. The oldest established industry in India, namely the extensive cotton textile industry centering round Bombay, has been the main preserve of Indian owned capital. Though recently British capital is said to have made some encroachment on this field. As against this, we have to set the fact that the jute industry in Bengal (more properly, the industrial preparation of raw jute), which was formerly chiefly financed by British capital, is now carried on by Indian capital to the extent of 80 per

cent. As to the general position of Indian owned capital as against British owned capital, we have the statement of a former president of the Bengal Chamber of Commerce (Sir William Carey), who maintained before the House of Commons Commerce Committee that 60 per cent of the capital employed in India was Indian and that it had "largely" increased in proportion to the British since the war (*Manchester Guardian*, 8 May 1925).

The amount of British capital in India has been variously estimated at between 1000 and 750,000,000 pounds sterling. Taking then the lower figure as representing 40 per cent of the entire capital operating in India, we get the huge sum of 1125 million pounds sterling as representing 60 per cent owned by the Indian capitalist class (on the basis of the estimate of the president of the Bengal Chamber of Commerce). In the absence of more detailed data, this estimate must be accepted with some reserve. But it is evident from an accumulation of other concurrent facts that if Indian capital does not exceed British capital, it comes very near to it. What still gives the impression of the hegemony of British capital in Indian economy is that British firms have evolved and imposed a peculiar system of "managing agency" by which they continue to control industries in the financing of which they have very little or even no share.

### *Increased Native Capital*

However as to the greatly increased volume of mobility of capital accumulations in the hands of the Indian capitalists since the war, we have overwhelming circumstantial evidence from competent imperialist sources. The *London Economist* reports that "in addition to the reduction of India's sterling debt due to direct government action, individual Indian investors have been reducing India's external liabilities by themselves buying back sterling loans...(raised by the government of India in London)". Commenting on this tendency on the part of Indian capital to liquidate Indian indebtedness to England,



the *Times* marked "the beginning of a period when Indians will no longer bury their savings in the ground but will use them for reproductive purposes to the advantage of the world in general and India in particular" (1 March 1927). The position is not only accepted but encouraged by the imperial authorities because, as stated by the *Economist* "the result will be to release British capital now invested in India for utilisation in other countries".

We have also to register the very significant movement of Indian capital to the less developed British colonies like Kenya and South Africa, where its competition has led to protracted political complications with the imperial government. In 1925, no less an authority than the finance minister of the government of India said:

"It may sound fantastic...to talk of India not only supplying the whole of her capital requirements, but also becoming a lender of capital for the development of other countries... The time is not far distant when India will be doing both of these things."

### "Colonial Imperialists"

What is clear from the foregoing forecast is that the imperial authorities are clearly envisaging the impending end of the period of export of finance capital to India, and, even the beginning of the period of export of capital from India to other (colonial) countries. The result of such a process in the "not far distant" time will certainly be "fantastic". It will mean, *mirabile dictu*, the imperialist debut of the "colonial" bourgeoisie of India, in, of course—as the British imperialists intend—a specific form of subordinate collaboration with British imperialism. Plainly speaking, it will mean the economic autonomy or the definite "de-colonisation" of India. Because, a country "not only supplying the whole of her capital requirements but also becoming a lender of capital to other countries" will certainly no more be a "colony" so far as the economic meaning of "colonisation" is concerned.

In the actual period, we are, it is true, as yet far from

that state of affairs, and although the tendencies towards "de-colonisation" are clearly operative they do not yet command a free field for their operation. For one thing, British imperialism, with its financial, political and military apparatus, still stands in the way of the working out of underlying economic potentialities; though however, it is consciously and adroitly changing its position. "It is trying to attract to its side new strata of the Indian bourgeoisie in order to strengthen its position by a policy of concessions. All the while, it is holding tenaciously to every piece of ground that it occupies, and whenever it is forced to retire from an untenable position, it does so after fighting a desperate rearguard action."

The collaboration of British and Indian capital in the proportion estimated above, is responsible for the present rapid industrialisation of India. The "International Labour Office" attached to the League of Nations considers India as one of the eight great industrial countries of the world. It laid stress on this fact by electing an Indian as the president of the "International Labour Conference" held in Geneva this year. Next to Japan India is the greatest industrial country in the east. Since industrialisation began in India, it has gone on at a rapid sustained tempo, in spite of the obstructive exigencies of later imperialist policy to retain control of the process in its hands. The *London Economist*, writing on 9 July 1927, says: "Industrial production (in India)...has raced ahead of local powers of consumption."

The yearly average of the consumption of coal in India during 1909-1913 was 13,148,000 tons; it reached the total of 20,220,000 in 1926. The metallurgical industry also shows a great advance. The production of pig-iron and steel in India in 1914 was 235,000 and 67,000 tons respectively in 1925-26, it was 900,000 and 540,000 tons respectively. In cotton textile industry, India occupies fifth place in the world. In 1914, India produced in its cotton mills 1,164.3 million yards of textiles and imported from abroad 3,197.1 million yards; in 1926-27, the local pro-

duction is 2,258.7 million yards against 1,787.9 million yards of imports. The latest development of Indian capitalism is shown in the successful launching of a mercantile marine to oust British shipping from coastal traffic in the Indian ocean. Only a little while ago, a vessel of 6000 tons, constructed for an Indian company, was launched from a shipbuilding yard in Scotland, and the launching ceremony was invested with the character of a political gesture by the participation of the ex-swarajist president of the Indian Legislative Assembly.

The bare enumeration of certain principal features, as given above, does not exhaust the industrial developments that have taken place in India in recent years, but these are sufficient for the present article, as showing the character and tempo of industrialisation. The Indian bourgeoisie and its British senior partner represented by the imperial government are now face to face with problems of tariffs, banking and currency, familiar in the history of modern capitalist states.

## 2. THE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF "DE-COLONISATION"

The Indian bourgeoisie has been described as having been "born and brought up in the lap of British imperialism". Before making its entry into the world in this exceptional way, it has been forced by the pressure of historic circumstances to gestate for more than the normal period in the womb of feudal society. It still carries into its present awkward age of adolescence the marks of its birth and its pre-natal influences.

In spite of these disabilities, the political growth of the Indian bourgeoisie has been not inconsiderable. It has, of course, not yet emerged as the dominating social class, holding political control of the state in its hands in a specific form vanishing partnership with the imperial power. That would require, among other things, a still more advanced stage of capitalist development than at present. But the bourgeoisie is in the process of evolution.

More particularly in its political aspect, the relative

character of "de-colonisation" cannot be too often emphasised. The term is a misnomer, if it is taken to signify more than it is meant to signify. It is certainly not meant to signify the "de-revolutionisation" of India. It does not certainly signify a permanent liquidation of the contradiction of interests between British imperialism and the social classes comprising the Indian population. Most emphatically, it does not signify the exclusion of India from the area of Asiatic revolution against imperialism. On the contrary, it signifies an enormous intensification of the exploitation of the proletarian masses of India in the latest capitalist forms in the big urban centres, and the expropriation of the vast peasant masses in the "hinterland"; because the imperative needs of advancing capitalism are a reserve of huge, cheap and mobile labour power and vastly increased productivity of the soil through a system of modern agriculture which in its capitalist development can be erected only on the debris of the present peasant economy. Consequently "de-colonisation" signifies a profound disturbance of the social basis of the existing overwhelmingly vast majority of the 320 millions of the Indian population, and a tremendous concentration of revolutionary forces released by the colossal pressure of double exploitation of a desperate imperialism and an advancing native capitalism.

*"De-Colonisation" Makes Conditions for  
Proletarian Revolution*

The process of "de-colonisation" develops the preconditions of an immediate merging of the national democratic revolution into a proletarian revolution.

The political consequences of the "de-colonising" process thus resolve themselves into (a) the "de-colonisation" of a considerable section of the bourgeoisie and its withdrawal to the other side of the barricade, and (b) the transfer of the hegemony of the national revolutionary struggle to the proletariat and the oppressed peasantry.

With regard to the Indian bourgeoisie, its contradiction

of interests with British imperialism is partially equilibrated for the time being, only to begin again on a new place. How the equilibrium has been reached can be clearly seen from the details of the recent history of imperialist transactions with India. The first political concession to the Indian bourgeoisie was made under the stress of the last imperialist war, when in 1917 "the progressive realisation of responsible government in British India" was fixed as the official policy of British imperialism. This policy has as its latter-day slogan the phrase—"British Commonwealth of Nations"—a phrase very enthusiastically taken up by the prospective successors of the present Conservative government in England, namely, the British labourites. The policy materialised in the first Reform act of 1919 and awaits further development at the hands of the Royal commission\* to be appointed presently under the terms of the first act.\*\*

Lord Morley, a former secretary of state for India, had spoken of the fixed determination of British imperialism not to allow the introduction of bourgeois democracy in India. But the apparatus of bourgeois democracy in the shape of elected legislative bodies, has been existing in India already for some time. The most important characteristic of these legislative bodies is not that they in their present form exercise very little power, but that whatever power they exercise or they may exercise, is in the hands of two per cent of the population, in other words, of the native bourgeoisie and the landed proprietors who alone are enfranchised. The legislative apparatus with its limitations is being increasingly used, as in any other bourgeois country, to consolidate the interests of the native capitalist class, as against those of the working masses. Financial organisation of the country to correspond with the developing process of capitalism is being brought up-to-date. A Federal Reserve bank for the issue of unified

\* The Royal commission on constitutional reforms.

\*\* Has now been appointed.

currency is being brought into existence. The demand is becoming insistent to change from a silver to a gold standard. Some degree of fiscal autonomy—the most important attribute of a developing capitalist state—is already exercised, and is being pressed forward even against the interests of the industrial bourgeoisie in England.

### *Raising Status of India*

The Indian “State”—unlike the Free State of Ireland and the Dominion of Canada—does not yet exercise the privilege of diplomatic representation abroad. But India already became through an official representative, a signatory of the Treaty of Versailles and it is represented at the meetings of the League of Nations through its own representatives—though nominated by and under the control of the imperial government. The Indian Chambers of Commerce have demanded Indian consular representatives in foreign countries. This year a significant concession has been made by the imperial government in sanctioning the appointment of an Indian diplomatic representative to the dominion government of South Africa. The subordinate position assigned to India at the Imperial conference held last year in London did not thus correspond with the reality of the economic strength of the Indian bourgeoisie, though it reproduced exactly the state of its political subjection.

A very eloquent commentary on the process of “decolonisation” is furnished by the recent action of the representatives of British capital operating in India. The present capitalist development of India is the result of the operation of both Indian and British capital in a given proportion. So long as the share of Indian capitalists was a minor one and so long as they had not developed into a powerful political entity on the basis of their class interest, the representatives of British capital in India kept themselves aloof from any participation in the poli-

tical struggle in India, depending for their hegemony on the security of British imperialist control.

But now the picture has changed. British imperialists, with their greater political acumen, have perhaps more clearly appreciated the fact of this change than the Indian bourgeoisie—itsself the vehicle of the change. It will be remembered that in 1924—that is, when the first Labour government was “in office” but “not in power” in England—there appeared in London a rather sensational book called *The Lost Dominion*. The book was anonymous but internal evidence would show that the author belongs to the same circle of imperialist publicists as for example the celebrated “Augur” of the *Fortnightly Review*. The broad basis of the book was that the “dominion” of India was already as good as lost to the British bourgeoisie, that circumstances had arisen in India which make the further tenure of British rule extremely precarious except on the basis of a progressive devolution of control to a specific indigenous social class. Such a thesis was symptomatic of imperialist pessimism of the period when capitalism had not yet clearly emerged from the post-war depression into its present period of more or less relative stabilisation, and when in England itself a certain panic—though exaggerated—reigned as to the future of the British empire on account of the rise to power of the British labourites. Since then, there has been a change in the imperialist outlook as regards India—the excessive pessimism of 1924 has been corrected. The correction has been made possible by the policy of compromise with the Indian bourgeoisie. Basing himself on that, Lord Birkenhead, the secretary of state for India, has been protesting in the House of Lords that “India is not a lost dominion”. But the very fact that a secretary of state for India—even when he is a fundamentally vulgar demagogue like Lord Birkenhead—has to “protest too much” is an indication of the change in Indo-British relations that has been accomplished. A more balanced imperialist view of the situation is given in the latest number of the *London Review*,

the "Round Table". In its issue of September 1927, we read:

"The government of India has changed almost beyond recognition... it will change even more in the future... it is not the unquestioned arbiter of the destinies of India, but has become increasingly responsive to the opinion of a certain class of the ruled... *The British government in India is abdicating its power progressively in favour of the educated middle class.*" (My emphasis—G.L.)

The Indian bourgeoisie has become a recognised political force, joining issue in the political struggle simultaneously against the working masses of India. Therefore, now that the non-bourgeois social classes in India are heading towards a revolutionary orientation and British imperialism is forced to ensure its continuity by a closer liaison with the Indian bourgeoisie, the representatives of British capitalism there, have for the first time discarded their aloofness from their brother class in India and have come out with an offer of political alliance.

There was held in London in July last year, a meeting of the Indian section of the London Chamber of Commerce, attended by representatives of over 100 (British) firms and companies established in, or trading with India. Between themselves they accounted for "one thousand million pounds of British capital invested in India". They met together to assert that:

"British businessmen had so much capital invested in India and Indian trade that it was virtually necessary they should exercise their right to do all in their power to ensure that in the experimental and transitional period to self-government, unwise measures should not be taken which might do irreparable damage not only to India but to Great Britain. No one could foretell whether the anticipated Royal commission on Indian constitutional reform would make any far-reaching recommendations or not, but everyone



would admit that, with the increasing spread of western ideas and of education in India, some further reforms and adjustments might be desirable... any fresh constitutional changes should be devised with full appreciation of the economic issues at stake as well as of those which were purely political."

The president of the European association in India noted at the meeting the tendencies of the Indian bourgeoisie "is poor in India".

"to look at every question from a racial point of view and to take an anti-British standpoint, regardless of the true economic interests of India. The threat of discrimination against British commercial interests was serious and would have to be borne in mind when the time came to meet the Royal commission. Already a bill to reserve the coastal traffic of India to a purely Indian mercantile marine had been introduced. Rail traffic in India was gradually passing under state control."

In view of the danger of the submerging of British capitalist interests in India, the meeting came to the conclusion that "a new organisation could be formed to include not only British but also Indian commercial interests". The new organisation to be called the "Progressive League" would—

"...enunciate emphatically the principle of complete and definite cooperation between the British and responsible Indian communities whose interests were identical."

Further, the British capitalists would give to the Indian bourgeoisie, through the "Progressive League":

"positive proof that British interests were ready to cooperate with them, to organise for them, to protect them from insidious flank attacks."

The aim of the league was finally defined in these terms:

"...the aim should be to build up an organisation truly representative of British and Indian commercial and kindred interests—trade, industry, finance, shipping, the landowner, and that most important person, the cultivator. In this way these various interests would be moulded into one big constitutional force, strongly represented in the different governments, and would so have a very direct influence over the future of India. Thus her destinies would to a large extent be taken out of the hands of the demagogues."

In the proceedings of this remarkable meeting, we have the culmination of tendencies which have been discernible for some time past and have pointed towards the active political career of a bourgeois Indo-British coalition for the greater glory of capitalism in a "de-colonised" India.

#### *Character of the Political Issue*

The process of "decolonisation" naturally introduces a change in the character of the political issue before the national movement in India, so far as the various social classes are concerned. The various social classes participating in the national movement must and do differ as to its ultimate issue. Capitalism is sufficiently developed in India for there to exist a certain differentiation in the ranks of the Indian bourgeoisie.

There are bourgeois elements who have not made up their mind as to whether they are for or against British imperialism. *But the upper bourgeoisie has, however, definitely gone over to the side of British imperialism.* It means that they have come to a tacit agreement as to the joint exploitation of the masses of India, although it does not, however, mean that there does not exist any contradiction of interests between them.

There is a certain duality in the present policy of the imperial government: on the one hand to develop India capitalistically, and on the other hand, to retain control of

the process in its own hands. In other words the policy is to give the widest possible elbow room to Indian capital to develop itself, but within the framework of the British empire. Practically it means in the actual circumstances, an inevitable strengthening of the native capitalist class on the one hand, and an equally inevitable brake on its development on the other hand. From this springs fundamental contradiction.

On the other hand, to the other classes, now subject to a more intensified process of double exploitation, the issue of the national struggle is becoming more and more synonymous with the revolutionary overthrow of British imperialism, while for the bourgeoisie the issue is one which evidently admits of solution by way of accommodation and compromise with the imperialist interests. We thus find the political characteristics of the present situation in India to be (a) active negotiation between the Indian bourgeoisie and the imperial government in view of the Royal commission on constitutional reform; (b) the consequent reformist degeneration of the national movement under the leadership of the bourgeois political parties; (c) a move towards leadership of the national revolutionary struggle by the proletariat, and (d) the increasing revolutionisation of the petty bourgeois, intellectual, proletarian and peasant masses.

### *The Indian National Congress*

To illustrate these general lines of development in Indian politics, we shall make a rapid survey first of all of the activities of the Indian National Congress during the period under review. This body which meets ordinarily once a year is not the highest organ of any one party, but of the whole national movement, as it has developed up till now since 1880. As such, it has become a federation of the various nationalist parties, with the exception of the parties of the extreme Right or reactionary groups.

From 1921 onwards, the Congress has gradually moved towards the Right. At its session of 1925, at Cawnpur, it

still retained some vestige of the earlier revolution orientation of 1919-20 when the masses were ready to change from "non-cooperation" with to active resistance against the imperial government. The Cawnpur programme did not formally discard the policy of mass action as the final means for the realisation of the aim of the national struggle, though the aim itself of the national struggle, so far as the Congress was concerned, had by then become tacitly synonymous with "Dominion Status".

The last plenary session of the Congress was held at Gauhati in December 1926, and its decisions govern the policy and general line of work during the present year. These decisions constitute a further climb-down from the verbally revolutionary position of the Cawnpur programme and in fact a preparation for the full-blooded reformism of the Congress leadership during the present period. In the principal resolution adopted at Gauhati, there was talk of "a determined resistance to every activity, governmental or otherwise, that may impede the nation's progress towards swaraj (self-government)". It was also resolved that the Congress Party (formerly the Swaraj Party) in the legislatures should "refuse to accept ministership or other offices in the gift of the government" and "oppose the formation of ministries by other parties until in the opinion of the Congress or the All-India Congress committee, a satisfactory response is made by the government to the national demand". But, on the other hand, the principle of cooperation with the imperial government was admitted in as much as the Congress Party was authorised to "move (in the legislatures) resolutions and introduce and support measures and bills which are necessary for the healthy growth of national life and the advancement of the economic, agricultural, industrial and commercial interests of the country..."

The president of the Gauhati session, Srinivas Iyengar, in his scheme of future swaraj demanded "control over the army and the navy" as the furthest encroachment he could think of in the position of the imperial government; but he

specifically left the control over "foreign relations with other countries" in its hands. At the same time the Congress rejected by a heavy majority a resolution demanding "the complete independence of India", though the resolution had the support of two provincial organisations of the Congress, and was pressed by the left rank and file.

The right wing of the Congress—organised as the "Responsivist Party"—had no difficulty in interpreting the Congress decisions as being a mandate for their own policy of closer cooperation with the imperial government on the basis and character of the latter's "response" (hence the name of the party—"Responsivist"). The imperialists themselves noted that—

"sooner or later the Swaraj (Congress) Party will have to come into line with the responsive cooperators, the independents, moderates and others who want to work the constitution, and although the journey of the party from non-cooperation to cooperation may take some time and will be camouflaged as much as possible, nevertheless it must in the end be accomplished." (*The Round Table*, March, 1927)

To leave no doubt at all, Srinivas Iyengar himself admitted at the close of the legislative session at Delhi early this year that the Gauhati programme:

"so far from sanctioning any extreme policy of obstruction or non-cooperation, commanded the members to cooperate with the government in all matters of national improvement".

The sort of "improvement" of the "nation" which the Congress president had in mind was simply the advancement of the Indian bourgeoisie, as is amply shown by the legislative activities of the Congress Party.

Even the less ambiguous part of the Gauhati programme was very soon very flagrantly flouted in the province of Madras. In Madras, as it happened, it was possible for the Congress Party to offer "determined resistance" to the government, because alone among the provinces, Madras had returned a clear majority to the local legislative council in

the general elections at the end of 1926. For some time, the temptation was very strong for some of the more opportunist leaders of the Madras Congress Party to "accept ministerial or other offices in the gift of the government", but the categorical prohibition of the Gauhati programme stood in the way. What the party actually did flatly contradicted another and, no less important, part of the Gauhati programme. Instead of "opposing the formation of ministries by other parties", it allowed the frankly reformist Independent Party to take ministerial office, though there had been no "response", "satisfactory", or otherwise, "made by the government to the national demand". There is a still more significant side of the Madras episode. At the May Plenum held at Bombay, of the All-India Congress committee, the official leadership of the Congress seemed for a moment to bend its head before the storm of protest of the rank and file over the Madras "betrayal", only immediately afterwards to retrieve its position by passing a resolution in the working committee, completely exonerating the Madras congressists and giving their action the official approval of the Congress. The working committee proceeded further to modify the Gauhati programme to suit the Madras experience.

In the central legislative assembly at Delhi, the Congress Party, disposing of a substantial voting strength of 40 in a membership of 145, did not purposely press the "National Demand"—as was implied by the Gauhati programme and as was indeed the practice with the defunct Swaraj Party. This was for two reasons. In the first place, on account of the actual state of conflict between the hindu and the moslem there was no agreement possible for the "National Demand". In the second place, it was intended to leave the door open for informal negotiations with the imperial government in view of the Royal commission for the revision of the constitution. The imperial government on its side has been watching with "relief" and "joy" the progressive detachment of the Congress from the masses. It has, however, demanded through the mouth of Lord Birkenhead still less "intransigence" and more consistent signs of "cooperation"

before the demand for an extension of swaraj in the direction of dominion status could be entertained.

The political significance of the May Plenum of the AICC lay in the barely-concealed readiness of the right leadership of the Congress to fall into line with the requisitions of the imperial government. The resolutions voted at the Bombay meeting were indeed meant to be a gesture of rapprochement such as Lord Birkenhead had been insisting upon.

The principal resolution was widely advertised as having solved the problem of the chronic antagonism between the hindu and the moslem which expresses itself in a series of bloody riots throughout India. What the resolution actually occupied itself with was "the future scheme of constitution", in other words, the Royal commission on constitutional reform. The resolution made certain concessions to the reactionary moslem bourgeoisie in the matter of franchise and representation, with a view to secure their support for the proposals of constitutional revision which the Congress intends to put forward as "the national demand." In the very next resolution, the AICC called upon its working committee "to frame a Swaraj constitution for India... with a view to its adoption to the Congress at its next session" in December, 1927.

The intention is clear in spite of the dementi of the Congress leaders—a dementi which they were forced to make in face of the indignation of the left rank and file.

### *Indian Bourgeoisie and British Imperialism*

The policy of compromise with imperialism which the Indian bourgeoisie is following was concretely illustrated in the activities of its political parties in the legislatures. If the task of British imperialism in the present period has been to consolidate its financial control over the whole economy of India, it has indeed succeeded very well with the active help and the connivance of the various bourgeois parties. The Finance bill of the government of India was passed. In return for protection for the Indian steel industry, the principle of "imperial preference" was accepted by the

legislative assembly. On the question of protection of the Indian textile industry, after a great deal of agitation and threats on both sides, a compromise has recently been reached. The question of the Federal Reserve Bank for India is being still discussed between the representatives of the imperial government and those of Indian capital, Indian representation on the directorate of the bank remaining as the only contentious point.

A reformist bourgeoisie seeking an alliance with imperialism on the basis of class interest is bound to play an objectively counter-revolutionary role in the development of the national revolutionary struggle under the stress of the action of the exploited masses. It is evident that the upper strata of the bourgeoisie are prepared to play such a role. Already they closely identify themselves with the imperial government in the name of "law and order" whenever the industrial action of the proletariat and the discontent of the peasantry threaten their vested interest. But more recent evidences show that the Indian bourgeoisie, in logical development of its class affiliation, may not confine its counter-revolutionary role within India; it may extend its alliance with imperialist reaction on an international scale.

The occasion for an anticipatory expression of this tendency is furnished by the latest phase of the international situation. The Conservative government in England is taking a leading part in preparing war against the USSR on an international scale. The many millioned rank and file of the national movement in India would unmistakably be on the side of the USSR is at once a provocation and an embarrassment for the war policy of British imperialism. But, by the side of this, we have not a considerable section of the Indian bourgeoisie which has with ominous and instinctive haste seized upon the occasion of the British pre-occupation of war against the USSR for a further development of its bargaining policy with British imperialism.

In the issue for 7 July 1927 of *The People* (of Lahore), the organ of the reactionary bourgeoisie in North India and edited by Lajpat Rai, a wellknown nationalist leader, we read:



"If Afghanistan makes a common cause with Russia in a conflict against Britain, it will not be easy for the British to cope with the situation... The best way to defend India is to arm the people of India to undertake the work of national defence. Will the British authorities change their military and administrative policy towards India in such a way, that the people may genuinely feel that it would be to their advantage to make a common cause with Great Britain in case of an Anglo-Russian conflict of the Indian frontier?"

The underlying train of thought in the foregoing quotation is not an accidental outburst confined to one journal. It is more elaborately developed in a long article entitled "Anglo-Russian Contest—Where Does India Stand?" published in *Forward* of Calcutta (1 July 1927), one of the official organs of the Congress. The writer of the article, a widely read Indian journalist, examines the British "bid for German and Japanese support" for war against the USSR, and comes to the following conclusion:

"It is very doubtful that a Russo-British conflict can be averted in the future; and in that crisis, Britain will have to depend upon India for the very existence of the empire. British statesmen may well analyse for themselves, if it would be to the best interest of India to sacrifice her man-power, economic interests just to serve Great Britain. It may be well for the Indian statesmen to enquire from British statesmen if the latter are willing to pay the price of Indian support in international politics. The latest consideration that any self-respecting Indian statesmen can demand is that the humiliating conclusion of the last Imperial conference, in which India has been placed inferior to all the so-called white dominions, be wiped out by immediate granting of full dominion status to India. Are the Indian statesmen aware of the potentiality of securing this concession, if they are united enough to make an effective demand through vigorous participation in world politics?"

*Forward* itself, in its earlier comments on the Anglo-

Soviet conflict, did not seem to be aware of this aspect of question, condemned the British policy of war and hailed the USSR as the hope of the oppressed peoples of the east. Now, however, it strikes another tune, evidently inspired by the writer of the quoted article. In its editorial comments, in its issues of 5th and 9th July 1927, it says:

“A fraudulent constitution is certainly not best calculated to inspire that patriotism in Indian hearts so essential for making them feel that attack by Russia or any other power on the British empire in India is an attack on their own motherland.

“The best solution of the Russian problem does not lie in the policy of ‘offensive forward spring’... No wonder, the problem of the defence of India is becoming more and more complicated. As long as the problem of defence of India is, in its last analysis, found to be synonymous only with the safeguarding of the commercial interests of Britain in India and the perpetuation of the bureaucratic system of rule, the mercenary troops will be the only pillar of the British empire.”

### *Left Nationalism of the Petty Bourgeoisie and Intelligentsia*

As against this sinister tendency of the bourgeoisie—“born and brought up in the lap of British imperialism”—to rush headlong to counter-revolution, we have, within the official national movement, the lower middle class, the petty bourgeoisie, and the intelligentsia who are seeing their economic situation worsening in the wake of the Congress policy of more and more open compromise with British capitalist interests. They form the vast majority of the rank and file of the Congress. Their discontent with the Congress leadership has driven them to form a left wing. Within the Congress they are the partisans of the policy of “complete independence”, and consequently the policy of war a outrance against British imperialism. Their evolution as a political force is recent. But they have been

able already on several occasions to arrest a too rapid overwhelming of the Congress by the representatives of the bourgeois interests. At the time of the Gauhati Congress, they achieved a political expression, denied to them on the Congress platform, by assembling in a "Political Sufferers' conference" where they put before the country a clearer formulation of the revolutionary character of the national struggle. In the provincial Congress organisations, their influence is considerable. During the last months at the provincial conferences of congress local committees, namely, at Kerala and East Godavari in the province of Madras, they have repeated their demand for "complete independence", and for the old Gandhist formula of "civil disobedience". In Bengal they have been particularly strong, but their organisation has been greatly weakened since 1924 by the operation of the "Bengal Ordinance act" under which the most prominent of the leaders to the number of about 140 are in prison in conditions of indescribable brutality.

The discontent of the left wing has found a more concrete and a characteristic expression in the "republican movement" at Nagpur in the central provinces. Starting with the slogan of "Release the Bengal Prisoners", the City Congress Committee of Nagpur revived the method of 1920-21 in offering "civil disobedience" to the local authorities of the imperial government. The particular law which they "disobeyed" was characteristically chosen. It was the "Arms act" under which the carrying of arms by Indians is prohibited. A considerable number of volunteers would march through the streets of Nagpur carrying swords and defying the police to arrest them. A "republican army" was finally formed with the slogan of freeing India from British control. The movement had begun to receive a large amount of mass support and to spread to other centres, when the government authorities arrested the leaders and momentarily succeeded in putting a stop to it. At the May Plenum of the AICC, the left wing proposed a resolution committing the Congress to the support of the Nagpur republicans. The resolution was shelved and the AICC very

hastily washed its hands of the Nagpur affair by appointing a commission of enquiry.

The Nagpur revolt is a symptom that the left wing is groping for a way out of the impasse in which the national movement has been brought by the bourgeois leadership. At the same time, the Nagpur revolt and other political essays of the left wing show the defects of its mentality and organisation. On the one hand it is not yet free from the domination of the social-reactionary Gandhist ideology, on the other hand it carries with it the anarchical tradition of the terrorist past of some of its elements. The social classes comprising the left wing are destined yet to play a considerable revolutionary role. But in its capacity for organisation and concerted political action, the left wing has grievously failed. It has failed in some cases to rise above the feudal issues of the hindu-moslem religious conflict. The causes to which this failure is due can be eliminated by a closer contact with the masses and a more thorough and more intimate identification with the class interests of the industrial proletariat and the oppressed peasantry.

### *Industrial Proletariat and Peasantry*

The most interesting fact of the present situation is that this approach to the masses is at long last taking place.

The 2½ million of industrial workers in India are not all organised in trade unions. The existing trade unions cannot represent more than one-fourth of this number. The All-India Trade Union Congress which unites about 54 trade unions does not thus speak for all the organised workers. Moreover, the AITUC is under the leadership of the reformist bourgeoisie, as also most of the bigger unions. Furthermore, both the Indian capitalists and the British government meet the industrial action of the organised workers with severe and bloody repression. In spite of these characteristic handicaps, the trade-union movement in India registers continued progress, and the organised workers show a capacity for initiative far in advance of their

backward condition, but quite in keeping with the intense degree of exploitation to which they are increasingly subjected. Small strikes are a permanent feature of the industrial life of the country. Larger strikes in the big industrial centres have been numerous. In the beginning of last year the strike of railwaymen on the Bengal-Nagpur railway brought out 20,000 men. The strike was declared at the initiative of the workers and was repressed by the armed forces of the British government and the interested intervention of the bourgeoisie. The strike did not end to the satisfaction of the workers. But they showed, as usual in Indian strikes, great solidarity, endurance and courage. Most remarkable of all, at the end of the strike they took steps to remove from the trade-union executive committee the leaders who had been lukewarm and betrayed their interests. In the more recent case of the strike of the oil workers in Madras, there was better organisation, and by the threat of a general strike in the city of Madras, the workers gained a complete victory.

These strikes and the still larger strikes during the last two or three years have given a practical training in class struggle to the young proletariat of India. That the industrial workers of India are already a big political factor is recognised by the Indian bourgeoisie, the British government and even by the Second International, which latter has been trying, for some time past to form a Labour Party in India. The Indian capitalist class is genuinely alarmed at the growth of the labour movement; it would have none of these "western quarrels between capital and labour in our country". The nationalist press shows its repeated anxiety "to avoid a class struggle in this country". The president of the National Congress proclaims:

"There is perfect identity of feeling and interest between the national movement and labour. None need fear that in India the legitimate interests of labour will be sacrificed to capitalist interests; or that the Congress can neither reconcile them nor be just to both."

The peasant question is particularly acute in the "Native States", the territory comprising one-third of India under

the direct rule of the feudal class. In some of these "States", agrarian discontent is chronic, and has to be repeatedly put down by armed forces. In British India a great part of hindu-moslem riots are peasant risings against landlords and usurers. There is also sporadic but organised attempts of the peasants at non-payment of taxes.

A beginning has been made in the political organisation of these vast masses of peasants and industrial workers. The petty bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia are gravitating towards the exploited masses under the pressure of a community of misery. The advanced elements in the left wing of the national movement are increasing active in this direction. Out of the debris of the bourgeois-led national movement, there is arising a vast revolutionary coalition of social forces, in which the proletariat is destined to play the leading role and which can attain its objective only through the definite liquidation of imperial control.

In the three major provinces of Bengal, Bombay and Madras, and in the smaller area of Rajputana, "Workers and Peasants Parties" have come into existence with identical programmes. In the programme of the Bengal party we read:

"The imperial government which is established in India is not based on the wishes of the masses of Great Britain. The unique purpose behind the maintenance of this imperialist government is to assist in the exploitation of the proletarian, peasant, and lower middle class masses of India for the benefit of the capitalist class of Great Britain. Consequently under a government maintained in the interests of the capitalist class there can be no advancement of the proletariat, the peasantry and its lower middle class.

"The Indian National Congress, the parties included in it, and the Liberal and Independent and similar parties from time to time, no doubt, speak a word or two about the well-being of the masses. But in point of actual practice, they give no attention to the political,

economic and social demands and needs of the peasants and the workers. On the contrary, the action of these parties proves that they are, as a matter of fact, the defenders of the interests of the foreign and native capitalist class...

“There can be no final solution of the problem of the exploitation and subjection of the peasant, proletarian and middle class masses, unless they have in their hands full political power. The ultimate aim of the WPP is to establish a Federated Republic in India, a republic in which the means of production, distribution and exchange would be in the possession of the masses and be used for social purposes...

“Whereas, the only way in which the foregoing programme can be realised is the securing of complete national freedom of India from British imperialism:

“Therefore, the Bengal Workers and Peasants Party is not disinclined to cooperate with any other party which accepts these opinions and is willing to work for the realisation of this programme.”

As a sample of the political activities already shown by these parties, it may be mentioned that an attempt was made in the name of the Bombay Workers and Peasants Party to change the policy of the Indian National Congress and give it the character of a revolutionary mass organisation. The attempt did not succeed for the time being. But it is significant as the first attempt of the left wing to capture the Congress apparatus. The resolution of the Bombay Party submitted to the May Plenum of the AICC ran:

“The present Congress activity and programme are completely divorced from the everyday life of the masses, and in consequence the bulk of the population, the disenfranchised 98 per cent have lost all interest in and sympathy for the Congress, which has become a feeble body. The present leadership of the Congress has tied itself and the Congress machinery to a programme of work which is of benefit only to an insignificant section of the people—the big capitalists and their allies,

the intellectual and professional upper classes. As a consequence, on the one hand, Congress circles are divided by personal ends, and on the other, the masses are allowed and even encouraged to express their indignation against their hard lot in the form of communal fights.

“In the interest of the vast majority of the people it is urgently necessary to free the Congress from the narrow shackles of (bourgeois) class interests, and to yoke it to the task of attaining national freedom from the imperialist bondage, as a step towards complete emancipation of the masses from exploitation and oppression.”

The resolution then proposes the following changes in the programme of the National Congress:

“The aim of the Indian National Congress is the attainment of complete national independence from imperialism, and the establishment of swaraj based upon universal adult suffrage.

“It reiterates its faith in civil disobedience, i.e., direct action, as the only effective weapon that will ultimately free the people of India from their subject position, but realises that a great general awakening will have to be brought about before this weapon of direct action can be effectively used.”

More particularly Communist Party of India has come into legal existence. We quote the following from its programme of action within the National Congress:

“Whereas, in the opinion of the Communist Party of India, it is only the dynamic energies of the toiling masses that can bring swaraj to India, and whereas the present bourgeois leadership in the Congress has proved itself to be gradually compromising with imperialism, and as such is directly in opposition to the interests of the masses, this party calls upon all its members to enrol themselves, as members of the Indian National Congress, and from a strong left wing in all its organs for the purpose of wresting them from the present alien control.



“This party further calls upon the communists to co-operate with the radical nationalists there, to formulate a common programme on the lines of the following minimum programme laid down by this party:

“(a) Complete national independence, and the establishment of a democratic republic based on universal adult suffrage; (b) abolition of landlordism; (c) reduction of land, rent and indirect taxation, higher incidence of graduated income tax; (d) modernisation of agriculture with state aid; (e) nationalisation of public utilities, industrialisation of the country with state aid; (f) eight-hour day and minimum wage.”

#### *Influence of “Colonial Environment”*

In the increased activities of the left wing in the national movement and the emergence of the mass parties of workers and peasants with revolutionary programmes, we certainly see the influence of the “colonial environment” at work, more particularly the Chinese revolution. But in the actual state of the national movement in India, the repercussion of the Chinese revolution could not have gone beyond a strengthening of the left wing and the initiation of attempts at the political organisation of the workers and peasants. A “sympathetic” revolutionary upheaval in India in response to the Chinese revolution was out of the question, so long as the national movement in India was led—as it has been led up till now—by the bourgeoisie. The upper strata of the Indian bourgeoisie stand in closer relation of class interest to imperialism than was the case in China. The Indian capitalists feel themselves strong enough not to call for the help of a revolutionary working class in their “domestic” quarrel with imperialism.

The organisational form in which the awakening revolutionary forces are to crystallise is the concrete core of the problem presented by the present situation in India. That form can only be based on the specific nature of the rela-

tions of the classes within India and the relation of the classes in India with British imperialism.

*Communist International,*  
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pp 43-48 and 57-62

## V. THE INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT OF INDIA DEEPENS ITS CONTRADICTIONS WITH BRITISH IMPERIALISM

While trade capital is fast developing in a colony, the counter-forces against the subjugating imperialism are still very weak. The tendency toward economic independence obtains a greater force only where native industry is developing. The effort toward independence grows parallel with the industrial development of the country. However, this process of industrialisation in these countries goes on against great difficulties, because the pressure of the imperialist colonial monopoly resists the tendencies toward industrialisation. In spite of this, in such great colonial countries as India, the industrial development forges ahead, even if it proceeds with very great difficulty, and at a very retarded pace. I am not at all asserting that British imperialism is in a position to stop this advance. No. On the contrary, I conclude from the fact that this development makes headway despite everything, the deepening of the revolutionary contradictions between imperialist England and India. This is the question put in the draft theses. As against this, the formulation of comrade Bennett and others, "industrialisation of the colonies under the control of imperialism", is an impossibility. This is somewhat similar as if we would say "the growth of independence of the labour movement under the control of the bourgeoisie." These are two conceptions that cannot be brought into agreement. First of all, the development of

the heavy industry and the machine industry in the colonies is being checked by imperialist monopoly. I requested a few comrades to draw up a list, on the basis of the official government reports, of all the legislative measures that have been taken in regard to India after the world war and which have any significance, so that we can see quite concretely how English imperialism hinders or promotes the industrialisation India.

This list gives us the following picture:

*A. Measures favouring the industrial development of India.*

1. The 3 per cent assessment on the cotton consumption of the Indian textile mills was abolished (as a result of a textile workers strike).

2. The tariffs of the lower qualities of textile products were raised from 11 per cent to 16 per cent (England does not import textile goods of low quality to India, so this measure was directed against the fast growing Japanese import).

*B. Measures to hinder the industrial development of the country.*

1. In the year of 1920: A law on the Imperial bank by which the bank is forbidden to give credit to industrial undertakings.

2. In the year of 1922: railway construction plans with a capital expenditure of 1500 million rupees. The Indian bourgeoisie demands the orders for the Indian metallurgical industries. The orders were given to an English concern, since the English offer was pretty near 50 per cent cheaper.

3. In the year of 1923: orders for 3132 railway cars given to England.

4. In the years of 1926-27: a) the export duty fixed at 12 per cent in the year of 1919, on leather and skins (for the purpose of creating a leather industry) has been reduced to 3 per cent (thus raw material will be exported).

b) The rupee exchange has been set at 1.6, even though all the industries were against it and demanded an exchange at 1.4.

c) Instead of increasing the tariff duty on iron and steel, as demanded by the Indian bourgeoisie, preferential tariffs were fixed for British iron and steel goods.

d) The increase in the coal tariff demanded by the Indian bourgeoisie was rejected in order that the South African coal industry should be protected and promoted (South Africa imports to India).

e) Capital is being exported from India to Brazil and the minister of finance approves of it.

f) More order given away to England.

g) Duties on automobiles tyres were lowered.

h) The Royal commission on agriculture carries on its work in a sense that Indian capital (and the wealth after mobilisation) be directed to agriculture.

Here we see two rather insignificant measures regarding of which one could say that by them the industrialisation of India has been promoted; all of the remaining measures aim directly at retarding the process of industrialisation. I have stated already in my report, what the temporary circumstances were that forced the English government, during the war and in the first years following the war, to grant the respective concessions.

Comrades Losovsky took exception to the expression used in the draft theses which describes the colonies as the "agrarian hinterland" of imperialism, and instead proposed the expression of "raw material hinterland". I cannot see, in this, an important difference. We, of course, do not mean by the expression "agrarian" agriculture alone, but use it in its wider sense, as Marx also used it, by the inclusion of primary production.

## VI. THE INDUSTRIALISATION OF INDIA

"In the 19th century India was the chief market for British products. In the 20th century India is becoming rapidly industrialised under the control of British capital, which, thanks to a gigantic and irresponsible bureaucratic apparatus and to a position of the workers little better than that of slaves, finds more profitable opportunities of investment here than in the British Isles."<sup>1</sup>

"India is today recognised to be one of the eight leading industrial countries."<sup>2</sup>

The industrialisation of India under British control means that in the same measure in which the economic situation in Great Britain is difficult, British capital makes use of its authority over India and its cheap labour for the purpose of founding enterprises there and of undercutting the British workers with a view to reducing their wages at home in proportion."

In its essential points, this view is shared by all our comrades who have occupied themselves with the Indian problem (Roy, Rathbone, and Luhani).<sup>4</sup> We shall here attempt to test the accuracy of this assertion on the basis of the most outstanding facts.

### a) THE RATE OF INDUSTRIALISATION IN INDIA

It is very difficult to find a criterion for the industrialisation of a country like India. A contradictory process may be observed. On the one hand we see the development

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1. R. Palme Dutt, *Modern India*, p 9.

2. In 1922 Lord Chelmsford suggested in the name of the Indian government to the League of Nations that India be included among the eight leading industrial countries on the strength of possessing 20 million industrial workers. The motion was carried and the influence of British capital interests in the Labour office increased, which was what was intended.

3. R. Palme Dutt, *op cit*, p 11.

4. In this respect, comrade Mukherjee differs from the rest, expressing the opinion that in the last few years, since the Conservatives have been in power again, the British have returned to their old policy of opposing the industrialisation of India. (According to a study not yet published.)

of an up-to-date factory industry; on the other hand the still very considerable remnants of the old crafts are on the decline.

The rate of industrialisation is reflected to a great extent by the distribution of the population in the urban and rural districts.

The percentage of town population figured as follows:<sup>5</sup>

1891	1901	1911	1921
9.5	9.9	9.5	10.2

There can thus be no question of a big migration towards the cities, such as is inseparably connected with a general industrialisation.

A second general characteristic is the development of coal consumption.

	<i>Output</i>	<i>Imports</i>	<i>Exports</i>	<i>Net Consumption</i>
	Thousands of tons			
1909—13 average	13,509	434	795	13,148
1913	16,208	654	881	15,971
1919	22,628	68	144	22,552
1926	19,968	483	229	20,221

The increase amounts to roughly 50 per cent in 15 years.

If we take the returns of the Indian statistics of occupation which, it is true, even the Indian census considers very unreliable, we see a regression in the number of those living on industry between 1911 and 1921.<sup>6</sup>

Percentage increase in individual groups.

<i>Agriculture</i>	<i>Mining</i>	<i>Industry</i>	<i>Transport</i>	<i>Commerce</i>
+ 1.8	+ 2.3	- 6.0	- 13.8	+ 2.0

These figures represent a general regression of industry in India. Since, however, there is a dual process in existence, ie on the one hand the decline of the home indus-

5. *Census of India, 1921, p 65.*

6. *Ibid, p 241.* We have unfortunately found no table to indicate the development of the number of industrial workers.

tries and crafts and on the other the rise of the big industries, these figures do not present a very good picture of the position. The progress of the big industries may be seen from the following figures:<sup>7</sup>

Workers in Industrial Enterprises with more than 20 hands

(1911-12)

<i>All India</i>							
		<i>Enterprise</i>	<i>Plantations</i>	<i>Mining</i>	<i>Textiles</i>	<i>Metals</i>	<i>Chemicals</i>
		(in thousands)					
Number of employed	1921	2608	818	260	760	165	102
	1911	2106	810	224	558	71	49
Skilled workers	1921	701	16	67	329	74	24
	1911	555	18	72	251	34	12
Unskilled workers	1921	1794	788	184	403	80	69
	1911	1481	780	146	287	32	34

If we consider only the rate of development, the progress will appear to have been very great. A 25 per cent increase in the number of workers in ten years in general, a 35 per cent rise in the textile industry, 130 per cent in metallurgy, and 100 per cent in chemicals.

If, however, we regard the figures in the absolute sense and compare them with the progress of industrialisation in other countries during the world war, at which time the British bourgeoisie was most active in industrialising India, the advance is really not particularly great. An increase of 500,000 workers (ie 50,000 year), of whom 150,000 were skilled workers, does not represent very much in a country with 330 millions of inhabitants.

#### b) THE DEGREE OF INDUSTRIALISATION

In spite of the rapid percentage advance, the degree of industrialisation attained is very small if calculated by

7. Ibid, p 293.

the number of workers. In 1921, the population of India was engaged as follows:

<i>Agriculture</i>	<i>Industry</i>
70.9	10.7

Compared with this, the percentage of workers in industry was 17.4 per cent in Russia in 1897, 27.5 per cent in Italy in 1910, and even in Spain, the industrially most backward country in Europe, no less than 14.6 per cent in 1910. The degree of industrialisation in India is thus very small.

This is still more apparent if we consider the big industries.

In the actual<sup>8</sup> industrial concerns the number of workers was established in 1921. The census comprised all concerns employing at least 10 workers, even if not using motive power. The limit is therefore lower than is generally employed in similar censuses in Europe. The result was as follows:<sup>9</sup>

<i>Enterprises</i>	Number of industrial workers			
	<i>Total of operatives</i>	<i>Skilled workers</i>	<i>Unskilled adults</i>	<i>Children</i>
15.606	2681	724	1604	217

There were thus in 1921 no more than 2,500,000 industrial workers, of whom, however, 821,000 work on the plantations, "growing special products", as the census says. If we deduct these as not really industrial in character, there remain no more than 1,700,000 out of a population of 320 millions. Of all the "big industrial" enterprises, only 51 per cent use driving machinery.<sup>10</sup> It is therefore

8. In this connection "industrial enterprises" means any concerns employing 10 or more persons on specially stipulated wages for the purpose of manufacturing, repairing, ornamenting, finishing or otherwise preparing for consumption, transport, or sale, goods or parts of goods. Such industries are not included as are carried on by the members of a family for their common interest with employment of fewer than 10 wage-workers. *Census*, p 238.

9. *Ibid*, p 292.

10. *Ibid*, p 268.



mere bluff if India is counted among the eight leading industrial countries. The question next arises as to whether the process of industrialisation continues to maintain the same rate of progress as during the war boom or not. We doubt it.

### *The Character of Indian Industry*

The total industry of India is a primitive industry working to consumption. Its primitive character is demonstrated by the following returns of the census of 1921:<sup>11</sup>

Number of workers in thousands

<i>Total industry</i>	<i>Metallurgy</i>	<i>Building</i>	<i>Textile industry</i>	<i>Ceramic industry</i>	<i>Outfit industry</i>
15,700	730	810	4030	1080	3400

These figures show the insignificance of just those branches of industry which are most characteristic of modern capitalism and most indispensable to modern capital accumulation, viz. the metal and building industries, which together make only 10 per cent of the total. Roughly the half of all workers are occupied in connection with the clothing of the population. There are more ceramic workers, engaged mainly in making household utensils, than metal or constructional workers.

If we return to the above table of Indian industry, it will be apparent that, like the industries in all countries at the commencement of their industrialisation, it is a consumption industry, a "light" industry. 165,000 metal workers in big metal works are quite an insignificant number for such a gigantic country.<sup>12</sup> There is, indeed, only

11. *Statistical Abstract of British India, 1915-24/25*, p 38.

12. The rate of development in the heavy-metal industry is very rapid. The following amounts were produced:

one up-to-date metal enterprise, the Tata iron works. The attempts at creating a locomotive and engineering industry have met with very little success; certain newly-founded railways resumed direct dealings with English firms; their shares have lost practically all value.<sup>13</sup>

The sole industry which has really experienced a pronounced development is the textile industry, particularly cotton and jute.

Development of the cotton industry on the basis of the "Tariff Board Report" of 1927, compiled by Rathbone in his study on *Industrial India*.

Year <sup>14</sup>	No of active works	Spindles in 1000	Looms in 1000	Factory output (in mn. lbs)		Yarn exports	Exports (per cent of output)	Cloth exports mn. Yards
				Yarns	Cloth			
1899	167	4550	38	514	102	244	47.4	112
1908	218	5662	66	658	192	242	36.8	113
1913	238	6320	92	683	274	207	30.3	130
1918	249	6563	116	615	349	73	11.7	187
1921	245	6846	124	693	403	88	12.6	187
1924	274	7861	146	719	459	46	6.3	230

In every respect the progress is very considerable, but it by no means excels that in the other two great Asiatic

	Crude Iron (in thousands of tons)	Crude Steel
1913	207	32
1920	316	159
1924	891	340
1925	894	456
1926	927	457

The absolute figures, however, are very small, amounting to about one quarter of the output of Luxemburg. (*Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich*, International Surveys.)

13. Mukherjee cites numerous cases of this kind from *Capital*, the organ of the Indian national bourgeoisie.

14. The returns of the four columns refer to the Indian financial year, ending on 31st March of the following calendar year.

states, China and Japan as will be seen by the following figures:<sup>15</sup>

	No of spindles (in thousands)		
	1913	1924	1926
India	6084	7928	8510
Japan	2300	4825	5573
China	1600 <sup>16</sup>	3300	3436

It is therefore not the case of a special development in India, but of a part of the quite general tendency of a removal of the seats of textile manufacture to the regions of consumption.

In summing up, we can say that the development of the big industries in India has in the last few decades moved fairly fast, though by no means faster than in China or Japan. It has progressed at the expense of the old handicrafts and domestic industries, which still offer considerable resistance. It is only the cotton industry that has really developed vigorously. Metals and chemicals are making rapid progress, but the degree of development attained is still quite low. So far industrialisation has changed nothing in the fundamental character of India as a pronouncedly agrarian country.

*The Economic Policy of the British Bourgeoisie  
in India*

Granted that our thesis is correct that the industrialisation of India does not essentially differ in velocity or character from the industrialisation of other overseas countries in the 20th century, it follows that the economic policy of Great Britain has positively played no decisive part in this connection. If we pursue the economic policy of Great Britain in India in the 20th century, which we can here to merely in the broadest outlines, we can distinguish two pronounced periods, while the events of the

15. Data of the World's Economic conference. The figures for 1913 show an insignificant divergence.

16. For the year 1920.

last few years may possibly be taken to indicate the beginning of a new (third) direction in Indian politics.

The first period is characterised by the endeavour of British capital to prevent the industrialisation of India, so as to preserve that country as a monopolised market for British industries. To this end all imaginable means were employed, such as high import duties on machinery, internal dues on textile goods, and the like.<sup>17</sup> This period lasted until the first year of the war. It was not wholly successful. The above tables show that the industrialisation of India was already in process at the outbreak of the war; this applies in particular to the cotton industry, which counted 6.3 million spindles in 1913. The Tata iron works, too, came into existence before the war.

The beginning of the second period may be put at the year 1916,<sup>18</sup> when the British government agreed to the introduction of a protective duty to the extent of 3.5 per cent on cotton goods. The circumstances occasioning this change in the policy of the British bourgeoisie were as follows:

a) HOME POLITICAL REASONS. On account of the war, Great Britain had to withdraw the troops from India and therefore felt unable to support itself only on the small class of landowners. So as to counteract the national-revolutionary movement, which as early as 1905 had attempted a boycott of all British goods and which at the outbreak of the war found utterance in armed revolts and mutinies in Indian regiments, it was necessary that the bourgeoisie be divided from the masses by having its class interests satisfied or at any rate appeased by promises for the future.

b) MILITARY REASONS. In view of the lack of tonnage it was impossible that the Asiatic theatre of war should be provided with war material from England. Nor did the

17. R. P. Dutt, *op cit*, p 46.

18. Roy, *India*, p 15.

home production suffice for such a purpose. Therefore it was in the interest of the British bourgeoisie to develop industrial production in India itself, especially as regarded metals and chemicals.<sup>19</sup>

c) **ECONOMIC REASONS.** By reason of a shortage of goods and of tonnage, Great Britain *could not supply the Indian market* with goods. Japan flooded the empty market. From the standpoint of the British bourgeoisie it was a lesser evil to promote the industrialisation of India than to hand over the Indian market in its entirety to Japan.

d) **FOREIGN POLITICAL REASONS.** The war was being carried on in the name of the "freedom of nations", of "humanity", and so forth; it suited to the alleged ideals of the British bourgeoisie to make "concessions" to the Indian "people" (or rather, the Indian bourgeoisie) and to make these concessions known to the world in general. The outer form which this policy assumed was the Chelmsford bill, the promise that India should in the course of time be given the status of a dominion; there was issued the catchword, "decolonisation" of India.

In pursuance of this policy, Indian industry was granted a protective tariff, figuring on an average as follows:

	1914	End of the war	1921	1922
Percentage:	5	7½	11	15

At present there is a duty on all industrial goods with the exception of agricultural machinery. The extent of this duty varies; thus it is 2½ per cent for machinery, 10 per cent for iron and steel, 15 per cent for yarns, paper, etc., 30 per cent for motorcars and silk goods, and 25 per cent for coal,<sup>20</sup> metal sheeting, iron and steel semi-finished wares.<sup>21</sup> For certain raw materials, such as jute, hides,

19. Lord Chelmsford pointed to the great services the Tata iron works had rendered for the conduct of the war in Egypt, Palestine and East Africa.

20. *Manchester Guardian Commercial* of 24 March 1927.

21. *Statistical Abstract for British India 1924-25, 1925-26*, publisher the entire customs tariff on pp 656-665.

rice (unshelled) and tea, there are export duties, though the protective tariff is not so high as in Europe or the United States, it affords a considerable degree of protection to Indian industry.

In connection with the new policy, many English enterprises have already been "Indianised", ie they have assumed the form of Indian joint-stock companies. At the same time—both during the war and in the post-war period (1921-23)—a great deal of British capital was invested in India, as will be seen from the above table. This was the period of the tremendous profits of Indian industry, the growing accumulation in the country, the rise in the rate of the rupee up to ten rupees to the pound; it was a time of almost undisturbed collaboration between the British and the Indian bourgeoisie, both of which classes were profiting greatly.

Of late years the Indian policy of the British bourgeoisie appears to have experienced if not a change, at least a slight deflection, based on the following two factors:

**THE DETERIORATION IN THE POSITION OF INDIAN INDUSTRY.**  
The gigantic profits have ceased. The export of industrial goods to world markets has decreased. The competition among the industries of all imperialist countries for the hegemony on the world markets, presses down the price level in India in spite of the protective tariff. Many of the newly founded industrial enterprises are experiencing a sever crisis.

**THE DETERIORATION OF THE POSITION OF BRITISH INDUSTRY.**  
The experience of the last few years has shown that the position British industry enjoyed on international markets before the war is not to be regained "automatically". The great staple industries, coal, iron and steel, cotton, engineering, have for the last seven years been suffering a chronic crisis. Hence the tendency towards a restriction of the promotion of Indian industrialisation and the endeavour, more and more apparent during the last two or three years, to concentrate all efforts on the reorganisation, rationalisation and trustification of the home industry and on the promotion of exports.

The circumstances evidencing this new direction are as follows:

a) In the last four years there has been no emission of capital worth mentioning in the direction of India, the amount of capital going in that direction being no more than about two per cent of the total amount of exported capital. This can naturally also be explained in India's own capital accumulation suffices for the continuation of industrialisation, though as a matter of fact it is a consequence of the smaller returns reaped of late from enterprises in India.

b) The Indian government, which is completely dominated by British capitalist interests, is again placing orders, especially for railway material and construction, with British firms. The shares of the Indian locomotive, rolling-stock and engineering works have therefore fallen considerably and several of them have been obliged to close down.<sup>22</sup> As in the case of every young national industry, state orders play a decisive role in the industrial development.

c) The British bourgeoisie has effected a deflation of the Indian currency, which has hit Indian industry very hard.

It would require a special study to demonstrate how the British bourgeoisie has exploited and is exploiting India by means of controlling its currency. For lack of space we must limit ourselves to the main outlines.

The Indian currency of pre-war times was, since the Herschel commission in 1893, a closed silver currency with a silver and banknote circulation. The currency was maintained at a fixed ratio to sterling. The currency was "closed", in as much as there was no free coining of rupees; the face value of the rupee coins was much higher than corresponded to their value in silver. For the sake of maintaining the parity with sterling, which had been established at 15 rupees to the pound or one rupee to equal

22. V. Numerous protests and complaints in the Indian periodical *Capital*.

1s 4d, India kept a gold reserve in England. If the rupee rate threatened to fall below the established parity, the Indian government would purchase sterling bills in London with its gold; in the contrary case, it would offer for sale in London what was known as "Council Bills", payable in rupees in India.<sup>23</sup>

The advantages of this system for the British bourgeoisie were as follows:

The sphere of validity of sterling was practically extended to India.

The disposal of the money of India passed into the hands of the British bourgeoisie and served as a foundation for sterling. It is just for this reason that the introduction of a real gold currency with a circulation of gold in India was repeatedly refused by the various British commissions appointed to enquire into Indian financial questions.

The parity between the rupee and sterling was maintained from 1898 till 1917, save in the critical year 1908, when the British capitalists allowed the rupee to fall below par. But during the war the price of silver rose so high on international markets, that the rupee coin gained a far higher silver value than its nominal value of 1s 4d. The change came about at the commencement of 1917. By the end of December 1919, the rate of the rupee had risen to 2s 4d.<sup>24</sup>

The British financial capitalists, who had pumped the Indian gold to Great Britain when it was requisite in the interest of maintaining the stability of the rupee rate, were unwilling to make the least sacrifice for the purpose of maintaining the rate of sterling as compared with the rupee. On 2 February 1920, it was decreed that one rupee should henceforth be valued at 2s, so that there would be 10 rupees to the pound. This means that the depreciation

23. V. G. F. Shirnas, *Indian Finance and Banking*, London 1920; B. R. Ambedkar, *The Problem of the Rupee*, London 1923; *Report of the Royal Commission on Indian Currency and Finance*, Vols 1-6, 1926; B. Narain, *Indian Economic Problems*, Vol 2.

24. B. R. Ambedkar, *op cit*, p 193.



of the pound in relation to gold was eliminated in the case of India by an alteration of the parity formerly obtaining.

The result was that the British holders of rupee loans at a fixed rate of interest received one-third more interest, while Indian merchants who did business in sterling received one third less in rupees than they were really entitled to.

There followed the international economic crisis of 1920 with a sharp drop in the price of silver, from 89½d per ounce in February 1920 to 32 in February 1921. The Indian government wasted (or, rather, fruitlessly paid to England) 55 million pounds in an attempt to maintain the rate of the rupee at 2s.<sup>25</sup> The old parity was no longer defended. The prices fell. Pronounced "scissors" resulted between imported and exported goods in favour of the British capitalists, who were able to supply India with industrial goods at high prices and at the same time to buy up Indian commodities cheap and in large quantities. This was the time when very much British capital was sent to India to profit by the favourable opportunities there.

The rate of the rupee fell in 1923 to 1s 4d and long remained at that level. In 1925 a new commission was entrusted with an inquiry into the Indian currency problem. This commission, largely composed of Englishmen, recommended the following measures:<sup>26</sup>

Establishment of a central bank of issue with the sole right of issuing notes and with obligation of buying and selling gold at the fixed price. The parity to be established at 1s 6d.

All gold, including that formerly kept in London, to be deposited with the new bank of issue, which was to accumulate gold reserves permitting of a cover of the circulation to an extent of 40 per cent.

The recommendations of the commission were badly received both in England and in India. In England, and in

25. *Monthly Bulletin* of the National City Bank, New York, September 1926.

26. *Report*. Vol 1, p 221.

the entire capitalist world, it was feared that an execution of these suggestions would draw yet more gold to India<sup>27</sup> and thus endanger the European loans. The United States apprehended a serious drop in the price of silver in the eventuality of the adoption of a gold currency in India. In the latter country the bourgeoisie protested against the renewed establishment of the rupee rate at 1s 6d, being apprehensive of a fresh price drop and an adverse business position, and demanded a return to the former rate of 1s 4d and the introduction of a real gold currency with a free gold coinage and convertibility of the notes into gold.

The Indian bourgeoisie saw its demands refused all along the line. The rate of the rupee was again fixed at 1s 6d and the gold currency was not introduced. The interests of the Indian industrial capitalists were sacrificed to those of the British financiers.

The question of the central bank is not yet decided. The British bourgeoisie desires to have a central bank which it can control. The Indian bourgeoisie and the Indian "Parliament" demand to have a state bank less immediately dependent upon the British bourgeoisie; they desire that the governor or vice-governor should be an Indian, and so on. Even in this matter, the Indian feudal lords side with the British capitalists.

This and other economic measures show that the British bourgeoisie is by no means pursuing a consistent policy in support of industrialisation, as was the case during the war. The serious struggle for world markets both point in the direction of a prevention of industrial expansion in India. The alternating influence of financial capital on the one hand and of pronounced industrial capital on the other on the British government and its Indian policy entailed some vacillation in the latter. There is, indeed, the possibility of a complete return to the old policy, supposing that after the effected reorganisation and rationalisa-

27. In 1925 the private gold imports of India were 200 million dollars, half the world's annual output (National City Bank).

tion of British industry a still greater control of the Indian market should prove necessary.

By this vacillation in the policy of the British bourgeoisie, the relations between the Indian bourgeoisie and the energetic resolutions of the National Congress this year are the political utterance of this discord.

### *The Results of British Rule for the Workers of India*

The result of the rule of the British bourgeoisie in India is seen in the terrible need and cruel misery of the Indian people. We give some facts in this connection:

a) The population of India increases only by a very little, since every year about 10 millions die of "fever" which means starvation.

The consumption of opium and alcohol, both important sources of revenue, contributes to this result.

b) In the last ten years the rate of mortality in India has been 30 in 1000. This is the highest proportion in the world. In England the relation is 11.6 per thousand.<sup>28</sup>

c) Of 1000 newly born children, 25 died in India in the last ten years before completing their first year. In Great Britain the corresponding proportion is 7. The respective data were taken from the statistical year-books. The following figures illustrate the mortality among the children of the urban proletariat:

Of 1000 newly born children, there died before completing their first year:<sup>29</sup>

In Bombay	556
In Calcutta	386
In Rangoon	303

28. In the year-book on India published by the British government and bearing the presumptuous title *Description of Moral and Material Progress in India*, we may read as follows on p 186 (issue for 1925-26): "Outside the great towns the only physicians are those of the state hospitals. Malaria is a regular phenomenon in the lives of millions of India. Cholera occurs in many regions. The elementary principles of hygiene are unknown to 10 millions."

29. *Census*, p 132.

d) Instead of going to school, the children are sent to work. Of roughly 85 million children of an age between 6 and 15 years, no more than 9 million were found to be attending school. Of 320 million inhabitants in 1921, only 18.6 millions could read or write. Of 155 million women, only 2.8 millions, or 1½ per cent had these accomplishments. The exploitation of the children in the factories is terrible; even an official report states:<sup>30</sup>

“In 1925 there was a decree intended to prevent children from working in two different factories on the same day, a practice which is illegal but difficult to eradicate.”

e) After two centuries of English civilisation, there are still remnants of slavery in India:

“A certain type of agricultural workers is known as ‘Hali’. They are bound to their work serves to pay the interest, though never the capital. This relation between master and slave is hereditary, apparently comprises all the members of the family and cannot be dissolved save by the flight of the slave.”<sup>31</sup>

f) After two centuries of British rule, feudalism and serfdom still exist over large areas:

“We are faced with all sorts of ‘Inam’ leases, subleases, part-ownership, and a legion of other systems under innumerable native titles. In particular, there is the old enmity between ‘Inamdars’ and peasants the former affirming that they own the ground and let it to the peasants, and the latter protesting that the ground is theirs and that the ‘Inamdars’ have merely a claim to collecting part of the revenue in the place of the government.”<sup>32</sup>

g) The state of the great mass of the peasantry is one of chronic starvation. After paying all taxes, dues, and rents, they cannot even satisfy their extremely modest requirements, so that they run into debt, lose their ground, and tenants.

30. Ibid, p 118.

31. Ibid, p 246.

32. Ibid, p 243.

h) The position of the proletariat is that of a typical period of transition to the factory system. Eleven-hour "legal" working day, sixty-hour week or even more—according to the decision of the capitalists. The housing misery is appalling.

In Bombay 70 per cent of the population live on an average four in a room. A similar state of affair prevails in the other industrial towns. 73 per cent of all the children of the working class are born in dwellings consisting of no more than one room.

i) The national income is incredibly small, as the following estimates show:

*Estimates of the National Income of India*

	<i>Per head &amp; year Rupees</i>	
Dadabhai	1870	20
E. Baring and D. Banbour	1882	27
Lord Curzon (Famine Comm.)	1898	30
Digby	1898	17
F. Shirras	1911	50
K. T. Shah	1920	46
K. T. Shah and K. J. Khambata	1900-1924	36
	1915-1921	58
	1921-1922	74
	1900-1922	44½
(in pre-war prices	1914-1922	38.2)

We see that according to careful calculations the per-capita income increased by no more than nine per cent during the boom period of Indian economy in the war and early post-war years; seeing that the tremendous profits of the capitalists come under this head, the income of the working masses may be supposed to have remained at its pre-war level.

Of the total income one third falls to the share of five

per cent of the population while 60 per cent of the inhabitants receives only 30 per cent of the entire income of the country.<sup>33</sup> This means that 65 per cent of the population gets only half the average income or about 19 rupees (or less than 30 shillings) per head in a year!<sup>34</sup>

j) The political result is an alliance between the British capitalists and the feudal lords and big bourgeoisie of the country, with the object of a common oppression of the peasants, craftsmen and workers. Some of the intellectuals are corrupted by the grant of state positions. Mahomedans and hindoos are incited against one another.

The Indian bourgeoisie shows certain vacillation in regard to the alliance with the British financial capitalists which is the reflection of the vacillation in the Indian policy of the British bourgeoisie. When the British capitalists place difficulties in the way of industrialisation in India, the Indian bourgeoisie is in opposition, but their opposition remains within the limits of the British empire. Their struggles are for an improvement of their position within the empire and are not a revolutionary fight against British imperialism. It is only when the empire is finally in a pronounced state of decay that the Indian bourgeoisie will attempt once more to place itself at the head of the national-revolutionary movement, so as to preserve its hegemony in an independent India too. The task of leading the national-revolutionary fight falls to the lot of the Indian proletariat. It is only a victorious revolution on the part of the workers and peasants that can put an end to all remnants of the precapitalist period, such as slavery and serfdom and at the same time to all the misery and want resulting from the rule of British capital.

33. Khambata, p 307.

34. This incredibly small sum is confirmed by numerous individual returns as to wages and income of the peasantry, A Madras Pariah's earn 2½ d per head of the family in a day three quarters of this sum is required for buying rice and one quarter remains for all other necessities. (Preface to Pillai b G. Hater, p 13.)

## VII. NOTES OF THE MONTH

A new India is coming into being. The rising consciousness and action of the industrial workers, the growth of republicanism and victory of the independence slogan at the National Congress, the growth of the Workers and Peasants Party, the foremost role of the workers in the demonstrations against the Simon commission—all these are signs of the new India that is coming into being. The painful and difficult interim period of outer political stagnation and inner growth of new forces beneath the surface is reaching its close. The new period, in which the leading role of the workers and peasants in the national struggle comes ever more clearly to the front, has now already proclaimed itself. This new period in India raises questions and problems as urgent and vital for the British working class as any on the "home" front; for it cannot be too often repeated that the fifty millions in Britain and the three hundred millions in India are natural allies, and the strongest forces in the single fight against British imperialism.

This transformation of the Indian situation, which is still only at its earliest stages, is the most important general characteristic of the present period in India. At the same time certain developments and modifications have taken place in the role and policy of imperialism, in the role of the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie, and in the inter-relations of the bourgeoisie and of imperialism, as well as in certain important factors of the general political situation, especially with reference to the growing importance of the war question and external relations for India, which need to be taken into review. Questions have been raised with regard to the role of imperialism in India in the present period, in the light of recent evidence, which require to be discussed. In order to gauge the principal changes which have taken place, it will be necessary to survey briefly the developments in the role of imperialism, in the role of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, and in the role of the workers and peasants.

Finally, it will be necessary to survey the role of the British working class and of the existing leadership of the British workingclass movement as it is developing in relation to India.

The policy of imperialism in India has undergone some modification in the past few years. The rapid progressive policy which marked the end of the war and the first post-war period, the policy of economic transformation and industrialisation combined with liberal constitutional reforms, has met with an arrest and slowed down very considerably. The basic outline of the new epoch of policy which was initiated by the Industrial Commission of 1916, the Montague Declaration of 1917, and the Montagu-Chelmsford Report of 1918, and the far-reaching transformation that it meant of British policy in India, is sufficiently familiar. The essential character of this policy was that, economically, British capitalism in India advanced from the use of India primarily as an agricultural and raw materials reserve and outlet for British manufactures, with the consequent deliberate restriction of Indian industrial development, to the direct industrial opening up and exploitation of India under the control of British capital; politically, British rule in India advanced from basing itself primarily on the support of the big landlord class and ruling princes, to the new objective of winning the cooperation of the rising Indian bourgeoisie in administration through the form of dyarchy advancing to dominion status. The essence of the new imperialist policy was thus the taking of the Indian bourgeoisie into junior partnership, economic and political. Its cornerstones were industrialisation and dyarchy, advancing to dominion status.

The reasons behind the policy were three-fold. First, it provided that in any case the inevitable process of industrialisation, which could not be indefinitely held up from developing in India as in the other extra-European countries, should by a skilful *volte-face* in policy be actually taken in hand and turned to the profit of British capital. Second, it provided that the already dangerously



threatened and shaking political structure of British rule in India, faced with a growing national movement, should save itself by the familiar manoeuvre of buying off a section of the opposition, and seek to build for itself a new social and political basis of support in the rising bourgeoisie by taking them into a joint sharing of the spoils and developing a common interest of exploitation against the masses. Third, it provided an outlet and line of expansion corresponding to the general needs and stage of British capitalism as a whole, which was increasingly finding the basic home industries less profitable and offering diminishing scope, and was interesting itself in the industrial development of the colonial and new countries. These basic driving forces behind the new imperialist policy are important to remember now, when we are having to consider the fresh problems of a further phase in its development.

Today we are faced with a noticeable arrest in the development of the policy. The export of British capital to India, which reached an extremely high level in the years 1921-23, has fallen to a very low level. The figures are sufficiently striking to be worth setting out in full:

Year	British capital exported to India £ (millions)	Total British capi- tal New issues £ (millions)	Percen- tage to India
1919	1.4	237	0.6
1920	3.5	384	0.9
1921	29.5	215	13.6
1922	36.1	235	15.3
1923	25.3	203	14.4
1924	2.6	223	1.1
1925	3.4	239	1.4
1926	3.0	253	0.8
1927	0.8	314	0.3

After making all allowance for necessary criticism on the basis of figures of capital issue as an incomplete index of

all movements of capital, the general tendency revealed remains unmistakable. Are we then faced with a reversal of policy; or does this represent a temporary phase within the general policy, and if so, what is the significance of this phase?

Coincidentally with this, we find a significant change in the political line of the British government. The line has again moved to a conservative trend, though still within the framework of the new policy. The reforms are minimised; the supremacy of the executive is mainly stressed; the rate of progress is no longer spoken of in sanguine terms, but with heavy stress on the slowness and doubtfulness of any further advance. A Montagu is succeeded by a Birkenhead. The tone in relation to the nationalist movement is one of open contempt and indifference. There is a noticeable hardening against concessions and conciliation towards the Indian bourgeoisie. In the appointment of the Simon commission, above all, there is a deliberate demonstration of power against all sections, driving into opposition at the outset even the most servile moderate sections which only seek for any excuse to be conciliated, and revealing a manifest aim to display the undivided absolute character of British rule. Again we have to consider how far this represents a reversal of policy, or how far a phase within the general policy.

A critical view of the whole process of industrialisation and of the role of the British government in relation to it has been expressed by E. Varga in an important recent survey ("India the Focus of the British Empire" in the *International Press Correspondence*, German edition, 15 February 1928; English edition, 14 March 1928). Comrade Varga raises the question whether the extent of industrialisation has not been exaggerated, whether it is correct to speak of an economic policy of industrialisation on the part of the British government in the present period, and whether what has taken place as regards government policy has not been rather a temporary wartime policy undertaken for special reasons, military and political rather than economic, which are now no longer operative.

Consequently, he puts forward the suggestion that the period of industrialisation policy which opened in 1916 may have come to an end, that we may be now confronted with, not merely a temporary deflection within the general policy, but an actual change of policy and new period, and that, with changing conditions, "there is the possibility of a complete return to the old policy". The suggestions here thrown out, though only in tentative form, open up such a fundamental revision of our whole line in relation to the Indian situation as to demand careful consideration.

On the question of the extent of industrialisation there is no dispute. Comrade Varga shows that, although the *rate* of industrialisation has been extremely rapid during the past fifteen years (the census period 1911-1921 showed for the ten years a 25 per cent, increase in the number of industrial workers in enterprises employing over twenty workers, a 35 per cent rise in textiles, 130 per cent in metallurgy, 100 per cent in chemical, etc.), nevertheless the absolute degree of industrialisation is still very low—less than Russia at the end of the nineteenth century (10.7 per cent of the population engaged in industry in 1921, as against 17.4 per cent in Russia in 1897, or 14.6 per cent in Spain in 1910; and within this total the proportion in larger industrial enterprises very low, and in particular iron, steel and engineering industry very little developed). All this is undoubted; and, indeed, the whole policy and propaganda of industrialisation in India starts from the fact that India is relatively *backward* in industrial development compared to other countries at a comparable stage of development and with anything approaching similar resources (so the Industrial Commission Report which exposes very sharply the failure and neglect of industrial development, and similarly subsequent reports).

But when comrade Varga proceeds from this to question the role and policy of the British government in India in relation to industrialisation, and in particular to raise the question whether the government can be correctly said to be pursuing an economic policy of industrialisation apart from the wartime emergency measures, his line of

argument becomes more open to dispute. Comrade Varga argues that the industrialisation policy which opened in 1916 was due to four reasons: (1) home political reasons, ie, the danger of the political situation created by the war and the necessity of winning the support of the Indian bourgeoisie; (2) military reasons, to secure war industrial supplies; (3) economic reasons, to meet the war inability of Britain to supply the Indian market and prevent the Japanese industrial invasion; (4) foreign political reasons, to make a show of a liberal policy to India for war propagandist purposes. These four reasons, it will be seen, are all directly connected with the war situation. But while these circumstances were certainly the immediate circumstances giving the stimulus to the change in policy in 1916, it is very strongly open to question whether these reasons can be accepted as a complete account of the reasons behind the industrialisation policy of the government, especially as it has developed since the war (tariff policy).

It is only necessary to consult the government's own reports to see very clearly set out the more permanent economic reason consciously underlying the whole policy of industrialisation. This applies not only to the basic Industrial Commission Report of the war period, where the situation is examined under very much wider conditions than the immediate war crisis, but also to the post-war literature and inquiries. Reference may be made to such a standard document of post-war economic policy as the Fiscal Commission Report of 1922, especially to Chapter IV, "The Importance of Industrial Development". The commission reached the conclusion (p 54):

We have considered generally the advantages and the possible disadvantages which would attach to considerable development of Indian industries. We have no hesitation in holding that such a development would be very much to the advantage of the country as a whole, creating new sources of wealth, encouraging the accumulation of capital, enlarging the public revenues, providing more profitable employment for labour, reducing the excessive dependence of the country on the unstable profits of agricul-

ture and finally stimulating the national life and developing the national character.

Here there is no longer question of the special wartime emergency considerations, but of a permanent economic policy, "accumulation of capital", "more profitable employment for labour", "enlarging the public revenues", &c. And in fact government policy since the war, although undoubtedly very inactive and stingy in any constructive work, and putting on the shelf most of the Industrial commission recommendations, much the same as the "reconstruction" policy in England since the war, has nevertheless followed this general aim in its economic policy, as seen in its imposition of tariffs, bounties to the iron and steel industry, &c. (appointment of the Tariff Board, 1923; Steel Protection act, 1924; total suspension of the cotton excise duty, 1925; bounties to the iron and steel industry, 1924-7).

Indeed, the Fiscal commission went so far as to consider not only the general basis and grounds of a permanent policy of industrialisation, but even the problems and danger arising in the creation of an industrial proletariat. It declared:

"Industrialisation will, however, bring new and real problems, arising from the aggregation of population in large towns, and these will involve new expenditure. The administrative control of a population of 100,000 in a town is a more elaborate and expensive business than the control of the same numbers scattered through a countryside. Law and order are preserved less easily, the neglect of sanitary rules brings a severe penalty, the necessity for education is more urgent. Poverty and unemployment may assume forms hitherto unknown in India, and may demand new machinery to cope with them. These are possibilities which should not be ignored. But so far as they will involve additional expenditure, they may be set off against the additional revenue which industries will bring."

The menace to the existing order from the creation of an industrial proletariat is envisaged. But it is considered that a little "additional expenditure" will meet the problem, ie, expenditure on police, administration, social legislation, suitable education, secret service and corruption of labour leaders, after the recognised fashion of the modern industrial state. The whole problem is turned into a profit and loss account; the "additional expenditure" will be more than counterbalanced by the "additional revenue which industries will bring". Thus, the sapient government commissioners patiently trend the wheel of history, with the carrot of profit dangling before their eyes.

What, then, is the basis for the interruption or slowing down of the process visible during the past few years, since there is no ground for assuming a conscious reversal of policy? An examination of the evidence will show that the interruption is fully explicable through certain specific reasons which belong to a temporary phase, and which, so far from representing a reversal of policy, are actually in great part bound up with the whole process of British capitalist industrialisation in India. The first and most general reason is not peculiar to India or the Indian situation, but lies in the cessation of the post-war boom, and the reaction after the feverish speculation of the first years following the war. This general factor is common to the wider world depression, but is complicated and intensified in India by special conditions closely bound up with British policy. These special conditions, which constitute the second main reason for the slowing down, lie in the British financial policy in India in the present period.

The British government's financial policy in India, based on the control of the currency, has passed through a series of crisis in the post-war period, which have reacted with ruinous effect on Indian capital and industry. The disastrous attempt under the 1920 Coinage act to maintain the rupee at two shillings resulted in a deadly blow for Indian exporters (the export surplus of the first half of 1920 passed into an adverse balance in the second half), a wind-

fall for British bondholders, and the paying out by the Indian government to London of over £50,000,000 in a vain attempt to maintain the rate. Later, the decision in accordance with the 1925-26 Currency commission to fix the rate at 1s. 6d. has been carried through in face of the strenuous opposition of the Indian bourgeoisie, who have demanded the old rate of 1s. 4d., and protested against the ruinous effects of the policy of deflation. The financial policy of deflation has hit Indian industry hard, and in particular Indian-owned industry. Here, then, it would appear at first sight that British financial policy has gone against the policy of industrialisation and overridden it.

But, in fact, this financial policy is not a contradiction of the policy of industrialisation, despite its immediately damaging effects to Indian industry; it is, on the contrary, an integral part of it. For the whole character of the British policy of industrialisation in India is to secure industrialisation *under British control*. The financial weapon is the most important weapon for securing this domination. The currency policy is closely linked up with the policy of establishing a centralised ~~bank~~ banking system under British control (formation of the Imperial Bank of India in 1920 by the amalgamation of the ~~presidency~~ presidency banks of Bengal, Bombay and Madras, with ~~arrangements~~ arrangements to open a hundred new branches throughout the country; present arrangements for establishing a Central Reserve Bank). It is necessary to establish the conditions for the complete British financial domination of the whole process of industrialisation and industrial exploitation which will be carried out mainly with Indian capital, no less than with Indian labour. In the post-war boom Indian capital showed signs of accumulating and expanding too quickly for control. The subsequent crisis has punctured this; the wholesale mortality and bankruptcies of Indian-owned concerns have opened the way for judicious amalgamations with British interests and financial penetration (the experience of Tata's in the post-war period, the failure of the ambitious Tata Industrial Bank, and the eventually merging with British interests afford a particularly instructive

study). Thus, what seems on the face of it contrary to the process of industrialisation is seen on examination to reveal the clearest evidence of the far-reaching and integral character of the whole policy of British imperialism in India in the present period.

Third, government policy in the last few years has been concentrated, less on the immediate process of industrial development, and more on two corollary processes (1) financial reorganisation and centralisation, as already noted above, and (2) agricultural development. The Linlithgow Agricultural commission is the distinguishing feature of the present period in the economic policy. Indeed, the stages of economic reorganisation may in a measure be traced out through the successive landmarks of the Industrial commission of 1916-18, the Fiscal commission of 1921-22, the Currency and Finance commission of 1925-26, and the Agricultural commission, appointed in 1926 and still in session. Once again, however, this agricultural concentration is not contrary to the policy of industrialisation, but corollary to it. Already the original Industrial commission laid down the modernisation of agricultural methods as the necessary foundation of industrial development. Until the bankrupt Indian agriculture is able to provide some possibility of the expansion of the home market, the necessary basis for further industrial development is lacking. The Agricultural commission is not appointed to solve the agrarian problem; on the contrary, the real question, the question of land ownership, is expressly excluded from its terms of reference:

"It will not be within the scope of the commission's duties to make recommendations regarding the existing systems of land ownership and tenancy, or of assessment of land revenue and irrigation charges."

The British government dare not touch the real agrarian question, manifest and increasing though the crisis is, for its own existence is too delicately bound up with the whole existing rotten structure. Only the peasants' own revolution, in union with the workers, will solve this. But the



Linlithgow commission's aim is to discover within the existing structure such means as are possible of raising agricultural productivity and so providing an expanded home market for further industrial development.

Fourth, the British home problem of reorganising home industry, restoration of the gold standard with consequent intensified industrial depression, and rationalisation, has restricted available British capital for export. Hence, above all, the heavy fall since 1923 in British capital export to India. If capitalist policy is successful in increasing the surplus available for export, it may be expected that British capital export to India will again rise rapidly in the future. But the interim process of reorganisation and "rationalisation" both in Britain and also in India (for there are signs of a similar process confronting Indian industry) will have to be gone through first before there is a basis of further expansion. Here, again, we have simply a particular phase of the general policy of Britain in regard to the empire expressed in *The Times* city editor's statement: "When our export industries are at last placed upon a competitive basis, and we acquire thereby a larger surplus for investment abroad, we shall, of course, as in the past be able to finance all the requirements of the empire." (*The Times*, 9 July 1925.)

In general, the peculiar character of the problem of British capitalist industrialisation in India consists in this that the proportion of Indian capital inevitably increases as industrial development goes forward, while the actual British supplies of fresh capital are for home reasons growing more restricted, but that at the same time it is the aim of British capitalism to maintain control of the new industrial era in India and reap the richest profits for itself by use of its dominant position, banking monopoly, shipping and trading monopoly, international connections and machinery of state power. This gives rise to a whole series of special inter-relations and inter-actions of British capital and Indian capital in India, which are also reflected in the political situation. From this peculiar

character of the problem follow the apparent zig-zags and variations within the general policy of industrialisation.

But this is no ground for drawing from the present situation a conclusion of the abandonment of industrialisation or reversion to the pre-war period, with the consequent political corollary which this would mean of abandoning our central political perspective for India based on the certainty of the growth of the industrial proletariat. On the contrary, from every sign of what is going on at present we can build with confidence on our diagnosis of the continuing capitalist and industrial evolution of India, with the accompanying political revolutionising consequences, and in particular on the growth, both in numbers and in consciousness, of the industrial proletariat, alongside the intensifying agrarian crisis. Once, however, this central perspective is clear, we can with advantage examine the distinctive character of the present phase, which is a phase of depression, bearing very important political consequences both for the relations of the bourgeoisie with imperialism and for the development of the working class.

For these contradictions between the particular interests of the British capital and Indian capital within the general process of industrialisation lead to a process of renewed friction between the British and Indian bourgeoisie, despite their general basic alliance and partnership as exploiters against the exploited masses. In general, and on all fundamental questions, the role of the Indian bourgeoisie since the collapse of the Non-Cooperation movement has evolved in the direction of becoming more and more clearly counter-revolutionary. This is seen in the whole retreat from non-cooperation, the transition to the Swaraj Party, which was a first veiled step to cooperation, the parliamentary degeneration of the Swaraj Party into lobby bargainings and more and more regular cooperation and complete divorce from any mass movement, and the numerous splits and secessions to the right and growth of political groupings of open cooperation with British rule. But at the

same time, within this general framework of capitulation, there takes place a process of friction and antagonism which has recently grown sharper. This has shown itself most clearly in the resistance to the Simon commission, which at the outset, before the process of bargaining and capitulation has begun, has united even the liberals or big bourgeois elements in a signal national front. The same opposition has shown itself in several votes of the legislative assembly, notably the rejection of the Royal Indian Navy bill and the rejection of the Reserve Bank bill, as well as the carrying of the boycott vote against the Simon commission. Thus the role of the bourgeoisie in the national struggle is not yet exhausted, and may even extend under certain conditions; but it remains permanently limited in scope by its fear and hostility towards any wider mass revolutionary movement, and, therefore, very dangerous to the real struggle against imperialism. It becomes the task of the mass movement to exploit to the maximum the opportunities presented by bourgeois resistance, as in the boycott of the Simon commission, but under independent leadership.

Even among the leading bourgeois elements there is thus a sharpening of opposition as a result of the present situation and tendencies of imperialism. But if we turn to the rank and file of the nationalist movement, representing in the main the various elements of the petty bourgeoisie, the sharpening of opposition is much more conspicuous. Here an actual process of revolutionisation is at work among a considerable section, following on the disillusionment after the collapse of Gandhi and non-cooperation, and on the economic hardships of the present period. The strength and extent of this process is demonstrated by the advance and victory of the independence slogan, which has steadily forced its way upwards from below against the official loyalist creed during recent years, and after winning a series of victories or striking votes at various provincial congresses against the opposition of the official platform, finally secured unanimous adoption (ie, with the insincere consent of the bourgeois

leadership) at the last National Congress at Madras in December 1927. The Madras Congress also in other respects took a marked turn to the left, notably in the resolution of opposition to the British war preparations against the Soviet Union, the demand for the recall of Indian troops from China and Iraq, and the decision of support for the League against Imperialism. All these mark a step forward on the part of the main body of the Indian national movement from their former isolation and limitations to becoming a conscious part of the world revolutionary fight against imperialism.

The adoption of the goal of "complete national independence" as the official goal of the Indian National Congress is a landmark in the history of the Indian national movement. It is true that the adoption is still hemmed in by many limitations. The resolution in question qualified its adoption by the reservation that it did "not involve any change in the Congress creed regarding Swaraj" (that Congress creed being "the attainment of Swaraj by all legitimate and peaceful means"—as if Britain would provide India with "legitimate means" to become independent! The Labour Party, not to mention the capitalist parties, have made abundantly clear that they will employ force without stint to keep India in subjection). The acceptance of the resolution by the official bourgeois leadership was obviously insincere; they have not hesitated since to characterise the goal of independence as manifestly outside practical politics ("moonshine", in Lajpat Rai's phrase), and to treat the resolution as a "moral gesture" (so also the *Daily Herald*, which would otherwise be faced with awkward questions) for the purpose of better bargaining with the Simon commission. Nevertheless the strength of the pressure which was able to compel the acceptance of this goal is a powerful expression of the advance of the national movement, and its victory a big step to the clearing and strengthening of national self-consciousness.

One point on the question of independence may be suggested for the consideration of the national movement,

now that its adoption has been secured. In general terms, the battle between independence and dominion status has represented the battle between a real break with imperialist subjection and exploitation as against a compromise agreement, representing an improved position for the bourgeoisie, but continued imperialist exploitation under an altered form for the masses. But now that the first step to the recognition of the principle has been won, it is necessary to say that the mere abstract opposition of independence and dominion status does not yet fully express the principle at issue. It is perfectly possible to imagine a formal recognition of complete independence, in which the reality of imperialist exploitation continues unchanged through Indian bourgeois republican forms if financial penetration and dependence on British capital is already complete and remains unbroken. Comparison may be made of the "independent" south American republics in relation to the United States. In the last resort, the difference between independence and dominion status, if taken formally and in isolation, may be no more than a constitutional figment. It is **the** reality that matters. ***The reality of independence depends upon the breaking of the power of British capital in India.*** That is why the real national emancipation of India is inevitably bound up with the social emancipation of the workers and peasants. But this has an immediate bearing for national agitation at the present stage. In order to make clear the real meaning of independence it is necessary that it must be combined with a more concrete demand, expressing its character, ie, the direct attack on British imperialist exploitation. ***The demand for independence needs to be combined with the demand for the repudiation of the foreign debts and expropriation of the foreign concessions and capital holdings in India.*** Then alone will the demand for independence take on its real and living character. This is the next stage to which the national movement needs to advance, following on the recognition in principle of the goal of independence.

But the strongest advancing force of the present situa-

tion comes from the growing consciousness and action of the industrial workers. The economic depression is hitting the workers hardest. Successive attacks have been launched and are being launched against their already desperate conditions. The millionaire Indian millowners and their British colleagues are declaring that the only way is to reduce wages. But the attacks are meeting with resistance. Already in 1925 the stand of the Bombay textile workers against the attempted 11 per cent reduction of wages and defeat of that attempt was an historic event in the battle of the international working class. Today, the struggles are developing on a still bigger scale. The government is using every means to reduce the workers to submission, alike through their reformist agents in the trade unions who are using every effort to prevent and restrict the fight, and through direct legal repression and armed violence and shooting. But the struggle of the workers has broken all bounds, and gone forward in face of the opposition, and even sabotage of the reformist trade union officials, and in face of the armed terrorism of the government. In these struggles the Indian communists have been able to play an active and influential role, and establish in action their claim to leadership. Here in these struggles is revealed the force of the future in India.

Even more significant, the struggle of the workers has already taken on a political, as well as economic, character. In the demonstrations against the landing of the Simon commission at Bombay, on 3 February in which the British "Labour" representatives had the pleasure of assisting in the shooting down by "their" soldiers of the Indian workers, the leading role was played by the workers under their own leadership and behind their own slogans. In defiance of the government prohibition, 30,000 workers demonstrated in the streets, led by the central committee of the Workers and Peasants Party; and their slogans were: "Eight-Hour Day"; "Living Wage"; "Down with British Imperialism"; "Nothing Short of Independence"; and "Constituent Assembly". As against this, bour-

geois nationalism attempted no militant demonstration; and its only slogans were: "Simon, go Back"; "No Representation, No Commission"; and "Swaraj is our Birthright". 3 February 1928, is a powerful first signal of the future form of the national struggle.

Faced with the growing advance to consciousness of the Indian proletariat, the government is making every endeavour to restrict the workers' movement to safe legal economic channels of reformist trade unionism, both by its Trade Union act (nominally legalising trade unions, actually subjecting the trade unions to close government control and making class-conscious trade unionism illegal), through the development of Labour departments and officials, and through its reformist agents in the trade unions. For the character of these reformist trade union officials, fastened upon the trade unions from outside and maintained with government assistance, it is sufficient to quote from their own utterances in order to brand their type, that they may be known also to the British workers, and that the intrigues of British reformist leaders with these types may not be mistaken for fraternal solidarity with the Indian workers. For example, the report of the secretary of the Trade Union Congress to the Kanpur TUC in December 1927, reads:

During the period under report no strike was authorised by the Executive Council; but owing to very acute industrial conditions obtaining in different trades and in different parts of India, there occurred some strikes and lock-outs in which the officials of the Congress had to interest themselves.

And this is from the declaration of the president of the Bengal Nagpur Railway Union, speaking at Nagpur on 11 October 1927, when confronted with the struggle of the railwaymen against the Kharagpur lock-out:

The government of India as well as the railway administration know that I am always against a strike, that our union has always been against a strike. The government of India know that we have prevented many a strike.

This is the type with whom the general council members are carrying on backstairs intrigues, and then come home to tell the British workers that they have established fraternal relations with the Indian workers.

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## VIII. DRAFT RESOLUTION ON THE INDIAN QUESTION

M. N. ROY

### I. THE POSITION OF IMPERIALISM AND THE CHARACTERISTIC OF INDIAN ECONOMY

1. Until the beginning of the twentieth century India was a victim of the classical form of imperialist exploitation, supplying market and raw materials to the metropolitan (British) industries. The policy of imperialism was to keep India in a backward state of economy—an agricultural reserve and monopoly market for the British industries. British capital exported into India was mainly for the purpose of building railways, harbours, irrigation works, etc., to extend trade and tap greater sources of raw materials. By far the larger portion of the capital exported was loaned to the government of India for the above purposes (80 per cent of the British capital invested in India was loaned to the Indian government). The principal sources of imperialist profit were trade and interests on loan guaranteed by the government. (£20,000,000 is a recurring annual charge on the Indian Exchequer to pay the interests on the loan raised in England.)

British capital invested in India directly (not as a loan to the government) went also largely for railway-building; only a small amount in such non-competitive industry as tea plantation. Finance capital was the backbone of imperialist domination. Development of modern industries in



India was inimical to the interests of metropolitan industries which wanted an absolute monopoly of the Indian market. Capital accumulated as a result of industrial prosperity at home was exported to India not to foment there the growth of competitive means or production, but to enlarge the market for the products of the metropolitan industries. The growth of indigenous industries with Indian capital was obstructed by all means. They had not only to meet the competition of the much more highly developed British industrial system; they were subjected to legal disadvantages (tariff laws on the principle of free trade). An economically backward country was subjected to intense capitalist exploitation. The result was improvement of the bulk of the population; over-crowding of the agricultural industry; and unsteadiness of the entire economic life of the country. The periodical famines costing tens of millions of human lives were the evidence of the chronic unsteadiness of the national economy.

Considerable wealth was accumulated by the Indian landowning class and the trading bourgeoisie. The imperialist policy of obstructing the growth of modern industry in India prevented the transformation of this wealth into fluid capital. The major portion of this wealth was locked up in government securities, thus tying the pioneers of the Indian bourgeoisie to imperialist finance. The other outlet was usury which became ruinous for the peasantry. In this way the bourgeoisie became partner of the landlords in the business of exploiting the peasantry. The entire credit system was monopolised by imperialist finance blocking all the avenues of profitable and productive investment for native capital. The national bourgeoisie grew as an integral part of the imperialist economy—participating in the trade controlled by imperialist finance and as rentiers deriving their income through banks also controlled by imperialist finance.

2. The post-war crisis of capitalism forced British imperialism to change its old economic policy of keeping India in industrial backwardness. Already in the beginning of the war it was felt that in her economic backwardness

India was a weak link in the chain of the British empire. The more far-seeing imperialists recognised the necessity of changing the old policy and recommended that new methods of exploitation should be adopted to meet the new situation. (The viceroy, Hardinge's memorial to the imperialist government in 1915.)

The exigencies of war expedited the plan of industrialisation. The armies on the eastern front (Mesopotamis, Gallipoli, East Africa, etc.) could be supplied only from India. Arms, ammunitions, transport vehicles, army outfit should all be manufactured in India. Indigenous metallurgical and engineering industries, that had for years struggled to grow in the face of imperialist competition, suddenly received state patronage. In 1916 was appointed the Indian Industrial commission presided over by the leading spokesman of the "forward policy" to examine and report upon the possibilities of further industrial development in India.

After two years' investigation the commission recommended that the government must play an active part in the industrial development of India (Report on Indian Industrial Commission 1916-18). The same commission also recommended that "it is vital for the government to ensure the establishment in India of these industries whose subsense exposes us to grave danger in the event of war".

Another consideration contributed to the change of the old policy. Taking advantage of the inability of Britain to supply the Indian market with manufactured goods, owing to the militarisation of home industries and dislocation of maritime transport, Japan seriously threatened British monopoly of the Indian market. Japan could be kept out of the Indian market only by increasing the industrial production in India. The disabilities under which the cotton industry (the oldest and largest industry owned almost exclusively by native capital before the war) had laboured during decades, were partially removed, so that it could increase production and resist Japanese encroachment on the Indian market. Eventually, Indian cotton industry was granted practical protection (import duty of 11.5 per cent)

British capital flowed into the partially protected Indian cotton industry.

For decades the Lancashire textile interests had dominated British policy in India. To protect and further these interests the doctrine of free trade was imposed upon industrially backward, agrarian India. The abandoning of that traditional policy and adoption, in its stead, of the policy of "discriminating protection" marked a radical change in the position of British imperialism in India. The swing from Cobdenism to Baldwinism indicates that the basis of British imperialism (in India) is shifted from trade capital and trading finance to industrial and banking capital. There is a fundamental difference between the imperialism in the period of capitalist prosperity and imperialism in the period of capitalist decline.

3. The colonial exploitation of India is no longer for imperialist expansion—the result of capitalist prosperity. Now it is a means for capitalist stabilisation. The forms and methods of the exploitation, therefore, are changing. Imperialism wants to plunder India more than ever; but it lacks the wherewithal. Hundred and seventy years' brutal exploitation ruined the country. The standard of living of the masses sank lower and lower. Today imperialism must have a larger and steadier market to overcome the industrial depression at home. India cannot provide the required market, if she is kept in a backward and unsteady economy. Nor can Britain export sufficient capital to develop the potentialities of the Indian market. The accumulation of capital in England is on the decline. Sufficient capital cannot be exported without injuring the industries at home (testimony of J. M. Keynes).

The profits derived from past investments in India go to England mostly in the form of raw materials. These are necessary for the upkeep of the home industries. The profits from past investments can, therefore, be used to meet now capital demands in India by depriving, on the one hand, home industries of raw materials, and by the industrialisation of India, on the other. Unless the raw materials are transformed into manufactured goods, they cannot be

converted in India into money capital ready for re-investment.

4. Apart from her enormous reservoir of natural riches and labour power, India, possesses a very considerable amount of wealth, which could not be converted into productive capital owing to the old policy of imperialism. To harness this wealth for the benefit of imperialism is the present policy. Industrialisation of India is the corollary of this policy. If India could be industrialised mainly with Indian capital, but under imperialist financial and political domination, British capitalism might survive the present crisis.

Industrialisation of India immediately creates a market for the British metallurgical and engineering trades. Development of the productive forces will raise the purchasing power of India. Direct exploitation of Indian labour in more productive forms will increase the total amount of surplus value produced. Granting the native bourgeoisie the share, imperialism will derive greater profit than ever. The capitalist accumulation in India, which will be very rapid and large, owing to the superfluity and cheapness of labour power, will more than compensate for the decline of accumulation in England. Industrialisation of India will thus strengthen the position of imperialism—will be a factor contributing to the stabilisation of capitalism—provided that it takes place within the framework of the British empire.

5. Imperialism must proceed very cautiously in this new path which is as likely to lead it out of the post-war crisis as to destruction. The implication of the new policy is a gradual “de-colonisation” of India, which will be allowed to evolve out of the state of “dependency” to “Dominion status”. The Indian bourgeoisie, instead of being kept down as a potential rival, will be granted partnership in the economic development of the country under the hegemony of imperialism. From a backward, agricultural colonial possession India will become a modern, industrial country—a “member of the British Commonwealth of free nations”.

India is in a process of "decolonisation" in so far as the policy forced upon British imperialism by the post-war crisis of capitalism abolishes the old, antiquated forms and methods of colonial exploitation in favour of new forms and new methods. The forces of production, which were so far denied the possibilities of normal growth, are unfettered. The very basis of national economy changes. Old class relations are replaced by new class relations. The basic industry, agriculture, stands on the verge of revolution. [The prevailing system of landownership which hinders agricultural production is threatened with abolition.] The native bourgeoisie acquires an ever-growing share in the control of the economic life of the country. These changes in the economic sphere have their political reflex. The unavoidable process of gradual "de-colonisation" has in it the germs of disruption of the empire. As a matter of fact, the new policy adopted for the consolidation of the empire—to avoid the danger of immediate crush—indicates that the foundation of the empire is shaken. Imperialism is a violent manifestation of capitalist prosperity. In this period of capitalist decline its base is undermined.

6. The recommendations of the Industrial commission to encourage the growth of modern industries in India were followed up by the decision of the government to place with manufacturers in India orders for government requirements, railway materials, etc. This gave tremendous impetus to the iron and steel and engineering industries. British concerns projected and actually established large engineering works in India (Asiatic Steel Corporation, Peninsular Locomotive Company, etc.). In 1923, the policy of protection, which had already been practically in operation though not in general, received legislative sanction. The British government of India adopted the principle of "discriminate protection".

Measures were also taken to create conditions for the capitalist development of the country. Relatively heavy taxes added to the other forms of exploitation had reduced the purchasing capacity of the masses to the very minimum. The British government of India set up a committee

(the Taxation Enquiry Committee) to determine the taxable capacity could be readjusted so as to remove the limitation on the internal market. Finally, the bottom-rock of the whole situation was touched. Capitalist development of the country cannot take place without solving the agrarian problem.

7. The landowning classes have always been the ally of the British power in India. As a matter of fact, in the earlier stages of its domination in India British imperialism created a class of tax-farming landlords as its social basis, so to say. While the agricultural industry was brought directly under capitalist exploitation in certain parts of the country by the introduction of modern irrigation system, generally the feudal (and in some places the primitive communal) character of the ownership of land was preserved. The check upon the growth of modern industry and destruction of the handicrafts caused serious over-crowding of the land. The pre-capitalist system of land-tenure, under capitalist exploitation, led to such continuous parcelment of holdings that in the majority of cases the holdings became what is characterised as "non-economic". The land held in tenancy by the peasant is so little and split up in such minute fragments scattered far away from one another that to cultivate it even only for consumption is not economic employment of labour power. On the basis of such a bankrupt system of agricultural production is reared a superstructure of capitalist economy. The peasantry constitutes nearly 75 per cent of the Indian population. Their purchasing power is the basis of the Indian market. To increase the buying capacity of the peasantry, that is, to rescue the agricultural industry from its present bankrupt backwardness, is an indispensable principle of the capitalist development of the country. To increase agricultural production, to modernise the methods of cultivation, has become the cardinal principle of British economic policy in India. The present viceroy is an agricultural expert. A Royal commission on agriculture is working to find the way and means to improve the agricultural industry. This can be done only changing the present system of land tenure—by abolishing the feudal

character of landownership. But this imperialism will not do. It cannot hastily destroy the social basis, on which it had largely rested for a hundred and fifty years. The implication of the present "forward" agricultural policy is, however, that imperialism is changing its orientation from the feudal landowning classes to the bourgeoisie. Here again imperialism must go cautiously, as it were, not to alarm its old faithful ally—to reassure it of continued support—question of landownership has been excluded from the terms of reference of the Royal commission on agriculture.

The policy is to create conditions for capitalist development not at the expense of the feudal landlords, but by driving the poor peasantry from the land. It is sought to create a class of well-to-do peasants through official cooperative credit banks. It is estimated that the policy of agricultural reform will in a year or two create a market for a million steel ploughs, thousands of oil pumping-stations and considerable quantities of other implements required for modern method of land cultivation. This immediate benefit for capitalism will be followed up by an increase of the agricultural production raising the purchasing power of the peasantry. A more far reaching result will be the movement of the population from the village to the towns. The labour-power tied up at present with non-productive land-holding will be released and made available for modern industrial production.

8. India never had her independent credit system. Her national economy has always been the victim of the fluctuation of silver price. British banks (the so-called Exchange Banks as the Hong Kong-Shanghai Bank, the Chartered Bank, the Eastern Bank, etc.) controlling the foreign trade of India were opposed to any stable monetary system. That was the policy dictated by trading and financial interests. In the new situation India must have a credit system based upon a stable currency. The accumulated wealth of the country cannot be converted into fluid productive capital in the absence of credit, a stable currency. The British government is now engaged in tackling this problem: how the accumulated wealth of India can be har-

ficance of bourgeois revolution (Marx). Now, the unaccomplished part of the bourgeois revolution takes place in India also under the protection of British imperialism; but in this period of capitalist decline its significance is counter-revolutionary. For example, Stolypin land reform is introduced in India not on the initiative of the native bourgeoisie; it is done by imperialism, often in the face of bourgeois nationalist opposition. To deal with the dangerous situation created by the peasant revolt in the post-war years the British government introduced tenancy reforms in the provinces where the revolt was the most acute. In the province of Bengal the reform could not be carried because of the unanimous nationalist (bourgeois) opposition. It is again imperialism that is approaching (cautiously and superficially) the agrarian problem as an indispensable pre-condition for the capitalist development of the country. The nationalist bourgeoisie has never tackled the problem. As a matter of fact, they are stout defenders of the present system of landownership. In the revolutionary period of 1921-22, the National Congress led by Gandhi, openly supported the landlords in the face of the countryside peasant revolt. The Swaraj Party repeatedly reassured the landowning classes that it was opposed to any attack upon their position and landed them as the pillars of Indian culture.

11. The bourgeoisie in a colonial country becomes a revolutionary factor in so far as it initiates and leads the struggle for the creation of condition for economic progress obstructed by imperialist domination. By adopting the policy of promoting the capitalist development of India British imperialism deprives the nationalist bourgeoisie of its revolutionary role. Under the present conditions the native bourgeoisie grows not as enemy of imperialism; it becomes its silly-junior partner, protege. Exploitation of human labour is the basic condition of capitalist development. The new economic policy of British imperialism in India sharpens the class differentiation and ripens the class struggle in the face of which nationalist struggle based upon capitalist antagonism loses its importance. The policy of im-



perialism in this period of capitalist decline does not cut across the general interests of the bourgeoisie in the advanced colonial countries like India. The antagonisms between the two cease to be that between the oppressor and oppressed; it approximates the "moral" antagonism inherent in the capitalist system. On the other hand, common interests and the common fear of revolution draw them together ever-closer in a united front in the class struggle—to exploit and oppress the working class.

12. Indian bourgeoisie outgrows the state of absolute colonial suppression not as a result of its struggle against imperialism. The process of the gradual "decolonisation" of India is produced by two different factors, namely, 1) post-war crisis of capitalism and 2) the revolutionary awakening of the Indian masses. In order to stabilise its economic basis and strengthen its position in India, British imperialism is obliged to adopt a policy which cannot be put into practice without making certain concessions to the Indian bourgeoisie. These concessions are not conquered by the Indian nationalist bourgeoisie. They are gift (reluctant, but obligatory) of imperialism. Therefore, the process of "de-colonisation" is parallel to the process of "de-revolutionisation" of the Indian bourgeoisie.

The influence of the imperialist war and the Russian revolution broadened the social basis of the Indian nationalist movement. It outgrew the narrow limits of the bourgeoisie and intellectual professional classes. It assumed a mass character and mass form. For the first time in its history, in spite of the reactionary bourgeois leadership that still dominated it, it objectively placed before itself the task of overthrowing imperialist domination and of liquidating the social backwardness of the country resulting from it. The bourgeoisie had not contributed to that revolutionisation of the nationalist movement. They even did not place themselves at its head post-factum. On the contrary, as soon as the nationalist movement assumed a revolutionary mass character, the big bourgeoisie turned against it and cooperated with imperialism in fighting it. The leadership of the newly revolutionised nationalist movement fell upon

the weak and unwilling petty bourgeoisie which debilitated the movement by imposing upon it a reactionary ideology and reformist programme. That revolutionary development of the nationalist movement, which the big bourgeoisie opposed and the petty bourgeoisie dissipated, was the internal factor that caused (rather expedited) the change of the imperialist policy. Therefore, the position yielded by imperialism is a conquest of the masses usurped by the bourgeoisie, as was always the case in bourgeois revolutions.

13. Imperialism is obliged to bribe the Indian bourgeoisie not only to broaden its base in India, not only as the corollary to the policy of increasing colonial plunder by the introduction of changed methods and forms of exploitation to meet the changed world conditions. The collaboration of the Indian bourgeoisie is necessary for the defence of the position of British imperialism in the entire East and in case of the projected war against the USSR.

India cannot be made the military base of British imperialism in the East unless complete support of the native bourgeoisie is assured. Should the Indian bourgeoisie be kept in the pre-war condition of absolute colonial suppression, they would look upon the USSR as an agency of deliverance, as the Chinese bourgeoisie did for a time. In that case they would not help imperialism to combat the penetration into the masses of the influence of the Russian and Chinese revolutions. But the Indian bourgeoisie "with a stake in the country—with a perspective of self-aggrandisement under the protection of imperialism—as is the case now, are as afraid of the "Bolshevik Menace" as their imperialist patrons..."

All these factors taken together determine the character of the Indian nationalist bourgeoisie. It is no longer a revolutionary force. Not only from the point of view of the internal conditions of India, but from the point of view of the present world conditions also the Indian bourgeoisie is rallied on the side of counter-revolution. It cannot and does not lead or participate in the struggle for national freedom (completely outside the British empire). Indian

national revolution has passed its bourgeois stage. It must still realise a programme which, objectively and historically, is the programme of bourgeois revolution; but it is no longer a bourgeois revolution, because it can and will succeed only by breaking the bounds of capitalist society.

14. The readjustment of the relation between British imperialism and Indian bourgeoisie, however, cannot be without hitches. Imperialism naturally seeks to buy the collaboration of the Indian bourgeoisie for the least possible price. The Indian bourgeoisie, on the other hand, desire to have more economic advantages and political rights. Consequently, on the basis of a united front against revolution, there goes on a parliamentary struggle between the two. Then, the contradictory interests of the different sections of the bourgeoisie, influence the situation. For example, the interests of the industrial and trading bourgeoisie clash on the policy of the protection. But while the financial group of Bombay are not altogether opposed to the scheme of a Reserve Bank (of issue) with share-capital, the manufacturing and trading interests unitedly join with the professional classes in their demand that the Reserve Bank should be a state bank. Owing to the unevenness of the level of its development, and owing to the inner contradictions of capitalism, the Indian bourgeoisie as a class cannot collaborate with imperialism always on all questions. Now, one or more sections support or agree with the imperialist policy and the others are in the opposition (parliamentary); and then, vice versa.

Taking advantage of the conflict of sectional interests imperialism splits the nationalist bourgeoisie, politically, this rendering their parliamentary opposition ineffective. The entire energy of the bourgeoisie is at present concentrated to secure further constitutional reforms which will enable them to carry on the parliamentary struggle for power more effectively. Imperialism, of course, will not yield the monopoly of state power; therefore, on the background of ever closer agreement on the basic economic issues, there will always be a parliamentary struggle. Without over-estimating it and always knowing its superficial

character, this parliamentary struggle should be used for the development of the revolution. In the next stage of the national revolution the role of the bourgeoisie will be limited to this.

### III. THE DRIVING FORCES AND PERSPECTIVE OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL REVOLUTION

15. The compromise between imperialism and the native bourgeoisie does not weaken the struggle for national freedom. On the contrary, it enters a revolutionary stage. The nationalist bourgeoisie have never been revolutionary. They never fought for national freedom. They always sought for an agreement with imperialism on the basis of economic and political concessions made by latter. The nationalist movement all along bore the stamp of the reactionary and compromising character of the bourgeoisie. Except in the case of the politically backward and socially reactionary petty bourgeois secret societies, the official programme of the nationalist movement has always been "constitutional reform" evolving in the post-war revolutionary period to "Dominion Status inside the British Empire". The debacle of bourgeois leadership releases the nationalist movement from the reactionary influence and limited political outlook. The programme of the movement reflects the objective demands of the workers, peasants and petty bourgeois masses whose interests cannot be defended and furthered except by completely overthrowing imperialist domination.

16. In the new era of agreement and compromise between imperialism and the native bourgeoisie the economic and political conditions of these classes will not appreciably improve. On the contrary, they will grow worse. The collaboration (united and anti-revolutionary front) between British imperialism and the Indian bourgeoisie is realised by the former conceding to the latter a large share in the proceeds of the exploitation of the Indian masses. The cooperation of the nationalist bourgeoisie is not secured at the sacrifice of imperialist interests. The share of the native bourgeoisie will be increased by a corresponding increases

in the surplus value produced by the Indian working class. The nationalist bourgeoisie frankly declares that for "national prosperity" the people must make sacrifice. (We recognise that in the efforts to attain a prominent position in the industrial world, India will have to pay a price. The economic well-being of India, which we aim at in the tariff policy which we recommend, cannot be obtained without making a sacrifice—from the minute of dissent of the Indian members of the Fiscal commission.)

In this new era of protectionism, the consuming public (majority of the population) will be obliged to contribute ever more for the enrichment of the native bourgeoisie and imperialism deriving benefit from industries thriving behind high tariff walls. The peasantry will be obliged to pay higher prices for agricultural implements, clothing and other manufactured goods. "Modernisation of agriculture" will be realised by creating a class of well-to-do peasants at the expense of the poor peasantry. Agricultural production will be increased, internal market will be extended, by driving the poor peasantry to wage-slavery either on capitalist farms or in factories.

The artisans will be further ruined. The destruction of handicrafts will also ruin the small traders connected with this industry. Extension of banking facilities will bring the rural trade more under the domination of urban capital squeezing the independent small trader out of the run. The urban petty bourgeoisie (poor professional classes, teachers, students, employees, small traders, etc.) will have to bear the burden of heavy indirect taxation in the shape of higher prices and rents. The petty intellectuals in India are completely proletarianised. They are an over-produced commodity thrown in ever-increasing numbers on the glutted market. A proletarianised class can save itself only through a social revolution—by the radical change of the political-economic system that has caused its proletarian industrialisation intensifies the exploitation of Indian labour. Since the future of British imperialism considerably depends upon successful harnessing of the cheap labour-power of the colonial proletariat for more productive pur-

poses, it will keep the Indian working class on the lowest subsistence level. The native bourgeoisie are a willing party to the violent exploitation and suppression of the working class, because their prosperity also depends on the unpaid labour of the Indian proletariat. Intensified exploitation of the Indian proletariat will cement the alliance between imperialism and the native bourgeoisie.

17. The movement for national freedom, as the political expression of these oppressed and exploited classes (constituting the overwhelming majority of the population) becomes a revolutionary struggle not only against imperialism, but also against its native allies, capitalist and land-owning classes. Class-struggle coincides with national struggle. The anti-imperialist struggle will develop and triumph as an anti-capitalist struggle.

The immediate political task of the national revolution still remains to overthrow imperialist rule and establish in its place a national democratic state. But the fact that the social basis of the national revolution is the oppressed and exploited classes, the democratic state established by it will not be the hypocritical bourgeois democracy. The class struggle, which is the driving force of the Indian national revolution, is not the struggle between two classes representing two forms of property. Indian nationalist movement in certain stages was a movement dictated by the interests of the bourgeoisie but the Indian national revolution will not be a bourgeois revolution. The motive force of the Indian national revolution is the struggle between the exploiting and exploited classes. Therefore its political task is not to realise parliamentary democracy which is the organ of bourgeois dictatorship.

Being essentially a struggle between exploiting and exploited classes, Indian revolution will be victorious under the leadership of the proletariat. But the revolution will reach the final victory through successive stages of development. The petty bourgeoisie, which participate in the national revolution, are identified with certain forms (decaying) of private property; therefore they will not

directly accept the leadership of the proletariat. Neither they, nor the peasantry will accept the programme of proletarian revolution. These classes can be and should be mobilised in a revolutionary struggle for democratic freedom removing their economic grievances, under the hegemony of the proletariat. Democracy is an end in itself for the class (bourgeoisie) which converts the "democratic" state into an instrument of its dictatorship. For the proletariat it is a means to an end—a step to socialism. The objective programme of the proletariat (socialism) will not be imposed upon the national revolutions; but by exercising hegemony in the national revolutionary struggle the proletariat will push it towards democratic freedom higher than bourgeois-parliamentarism.

By virtue of the fact that the Indian national revolution will develop and finally succeed as a struggle against capitalism, the proletariat becomes its driving force. All the other classes oppressed and exploited, fully or partially, directly or indirectly, by capitalism come under the influence of the proletariat. By exposing the counter-revolutionary character of the bourgeoisie; by emphasising upon the necessity of a revolutionary struggle for the complete overthrow of imperialism; by denouncing the programme of "equal partnership within the British Empire" as opposed to the interests of the Indian masses, by advocating revolutionary democratic freedom for all the oppressed classes; by putting forward demands to safeguard and further the interests of the peasants and petty bourgeois masses; and by placing itself in the forefront of the entire national revolutionary struggle the proletariat will conquer the leadership of the national revolution.

18. The petty bourgeoisie, particularly the intelligentsia is an important factor in the Indian nationalist movement. They are not satisfied with the compromising politics of the big bourgeoisie. They generally desire freedom from imperialist domination. Lately, they have repeatedly pleaded before the National Congress the programme of complete independence. Nevertheless, the petty bourgeois intellectuals are unable to liberate themselves from capi-

talist orientation, on the one hand, and reactionary semi-feudal social ideology, on the other. They will still go a long way with the revolution; but will eventually betray as their prototypes did in China. Sinn Feinism, Kemalism, American democracy are their ideals. Even fascism penetrates among them and Mussolini is idealised.

Indian intellectual petty bourgeoisie grew out of the landowning class. The system of land tenure in several provinces of British India is such as to accommodate a whole series (sometimes as many as ten) (of) rent-receiving middlemen between the owner and the cultivator. The urban petty intelligentsia is closely connected with this class as middle-owners grafted upon the system of feudal-capitalist landownership.

Owing to this intimate relationship with a backward economic system, the petty bourgeois intelligentsia is generally very reactionary in social orientation. Religion, mysticism, Gandhism, etc., have a strong hold upon them. This deprives their political radicalism (desire for complete independence) of practical value. It is usually dissipated in small terrorist societies without political programme and perspective. The political radicalism of the petty bourgeois intelligentsia cannot influence the nationalist movement, because there is no social force to back it up. For direct class interests, the petty intelligentsia are hostile to any readjustment of the existing system of landownership, which is the basic objective demand of the peasantry. In this respect they are more reactionary than imperialism.

While judging the relative revolutionary value of the petty bourgeoisie in the national-liberation movement these facts should be taken into consideration. National revolution cannot triumph in India except as an agrarian revolution, nearly 75 per cent of the population being peasants. The class that, by its very existence, is hostile to a radical change of the system of landownership sucking the life-blood of the peasantry, cannot play a very important role in the national revolution. On the contrary, just as in China, the radical petty bourgeois intelligentsia will



betray the national revolution as soon as its agrarian character will become sharp.

IV. THE NATIONAL REVOLUTIONARY PARTY:  
ITS PROGRAMME AND PROBLEMS

19. The struggle against imperialism and the reactionary politics of the native bourgeoisie (together with the land-owning classes) must be carried on with more vigour than ever by the proletariat, peasantry and the urban petty bourgeoisie. There must be a NATIONAL REVOLUTIONARY PARTY, representing these classes, to lead the national revolution. All the existing nationalist parties are dominated by capitalist and landowning elements. None of them stand upon the platform of national revolution. They are all parliamentary parties not developing any appreciable activity among the masses.

Considerable petty bourgeois elements were in the Swaraj Party. But the Swaraj Party itself is totally discredited. Last year the bourgeois right wing went out of the party and organised a new party frankly with the programme of cooperation with imperialism. Still, the Swaraj Party did not change its bourgeois orientation and remained wedded to the bankrupt tactics of parliamentary opposition. The petty bourgeoisie is completely disillusioned and are leaving the party. The party now exists only as a parliamentary group and election machine. By changing its name to Congress Party last year it captured the lifeless carcass of the National Congress. The petty bourgeois nationalist masses still swear allegiance to the Congress which, however, is not an organised party and is not the same as the Congress (ex-Swaraj) Party.

The petty bourgeois nationalist masses, nominally under the banner of the Congress, have been, of late, giving vent to their opposition to the compromising politics of the bourgeois nationalist parties, including the Swaraj Party. This general opposition has taken organised forms all over the country (Political Sufferers' League, Congress Karni Sangha, Indian Republican Association, All-India Volun-

teers' Corps, Indian Republican Army, etc.). None of these more or less revolutionary left wing nationalist bodies has a clear political programme. They represent the tendency of the petty bourgeois masses to find forms of activities other than the parliamentarism and constitutional agitation advocated by the bourgeois nationalist parties. The revolutionary development of the national movement finds the most mature expression in the Workers and Peasants Party.

20. The National Revolutionary Party will not be a party only of the workers and peasants. The petty bourgeois masses (as distinct from the consciously reactionary intelligentsia) must participate in the struggle for national freedom. The proletariat must help them to overcome their reactionary tendencies, and push them on the road to national revolution. In spite of their political radicalism, the petty bourgeois masses will not enter in the party of the working class. Nor is it desirable that the working class party should be flooded by the petty bourgeois elements (excluding the peasantry). The National Revolutionary Party should be the rallying ground for all the classes that still carry on and must carry on the struggle for the complete overthrow of imperialism and the establishment of revolutionary democratic power. These are, primarily, the proletariat, peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie.

21. The workers and peasants parties (which have now been federated into a national organisation) are in reality more petty bourgeois than working class parties. In Bengal, for example, a number of small landlords are to be found among the leaders of the party. The individual members (excepting the communists' trade unions and peasant unions can enter the party as collective members) are mostly petty bourgeois intellectuals. Nevertheless, the leadership of the workers and peasants parties is controlled by the communists.

This state of affairs stamps the party with a communist colour and the petty bourgeois masses stay away from it. If the Workers and Peasants Party is meant to be the Communist Party in disguised form, then its class character

must be clearer—small landlords must be expelled from its leadership; but if it is to become the national revolutionary mass party, it should abandon its working class appearance and it should not be so much identified openly with the Communist Party. Its very name is an obstacle to its development in that direction.

The Workers and Peasants Party cannot be the substitute for the Communist Party. As the driving force of the national revolution the proletariat must have its own party; but still there is ample room for a revolutionary nationalist party. The proletariat must enter it and actively participate in its leadership. In the present Indian conditions the proletariat, operating through the Communist Party, must take the initiative to hasten the rise of a national revolutionary mass party.

22. The principal points in the programme of the national revolutionary party are: a) complete overthrow of imperialist domination; b) establishment of a revolutionary democratic state based upon the oppressed classes (majority of the population); c) liquidation of decayed feudal power embodied in the native states as a support for imperialism; d) agrarian revolution (abolition of landlordism by confiscation without compensation, nationalisation of land and complete repudiation of peasants indebtedness); e) nationalisation of public utilities (railways, waterways, telegraphs, etc.), of basic industries (mines, iron, steel), of the tea plantations and of big banks; f) industrialisation of the country under the control of the revolutionary democratic state; g) modernisation of agriculture through cooperatives; state credit to agriculture; h) freedom of religion and worship; i) guarantee for national minorities; j) close alliance with USSR and other oppressed peoples in the struggle against imperialism.

When the bourgeoisie try to bind the Indian people perpetually to the British empire with the theory of "equal partnership", the slogan of complete independence must be pressed more energetically than ever. Any class or section, that does not fully accept this programme and is not

ready to participate actively in the struggle for its realisation has no place in the nationalist revolutionary party. It is an illusion that the bourgeois nationalist parties can be induced to accept the programme of complete independence and that of the revolutionary mass action that it implies. Neither will the National Congress accept the programme as long as it is dominated by the bourgeoisie. The National Revolutionary Party should enter the Congress (not the Congress Party) and strive to capture its leadership. Since there are still petty bourgeois elements inside the Congress Party, a left wing opposition should be developed therein with the object of pushing the bourgeoisie in the parliamentary struggle against imperialism and finally to liberate the entire petty bourgeoisie from the domination of capitalist politics. The antagonism between imperialism and native capital should be fully utilised by supporting the national bourgeoisie in the parliamentary struggle against imperialism. But the nationalist bourgeoisie should not be supported when the implication of their struggle against imperialism is the aggrandisement of native capitalism at the expense of the masses (for example, protectionism).

In comparison to the present colonial Indian government, parliamentary democracy is an advanced form of state. Parliamentary democracy is a progressive force when the bourgeoisie is a revolutionary class, because it is the political organ of bourgeois dictatorship. In view of the fact that the Indian bourgeoisie is not a revolutionary class, parliamentary democracy has no place in the political evolution of India. The programme of the national revolution cannot be the establishment of a state which will deliver the political power to the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie. The revolutionary democratic national state must be controlled by the oppressed majority. It will be a pyramidal structure based upon councils of delegates elected by the organisations of workers, peasants, employees, teachers, students, artisans, small traders, etc., etc. By uniting the legislative and executive functions in the delegates' councils (local, district, provincial and national) a

real democratic state-power will be established. The rights of democracy will not remain confined to casting votes periodically. Peoples' representatives will not only make laws, but will have the power and responsibility to enforce them.

Such a system based upon professional and economic interests will eliminate the question of communal (religious and caste) representation. The National Revolutionary Party must condemn the introduction of religion into politics. The reactionary religious prejudices of the petty bourgeoisie must be combated as harmful for the national revolution. Religious beliefs and forms of worship should be mutually respected.

The native states are the stronghold of feudal reaction. As puppets of the British, the native princes are loyal supporters of imperialism. National revolution cannot take place in two-thirds of the country (British provinces) leaving the remaining one-third of feudal backwardness. Therefore the princes are no less hostile to the national revolution than the British. Imperialism plans to mobilise the support of the princes as a check upon the revolutionary movement in the entire country. By creating a federation of native states, imperialism plans to break up India into two parts—in one of which British will share power with the native bourgeoisie, while in the other she will have the supreme power. Nevertheless, bourgeois nationalism has always kept clear of the native states, which are looked upon as precious remnants of India's past freedom and glory. The bourgeois nationalist parties often defend the absolutism of the native princes as against "British interference". The National Congress frankly places the native states outside the pale of its activities. Owing to unbearable feudal oppression, the peasantry in many a native state revolt. The peasant movement is suppressed with brutal ferocity. The national revolutionary party must support the demand of the peasantry in the native states. It must advocate the elimination of these relics of feudal backwardness and absolutism from the face of free India.

The peasantry constitutes nearly 75 per cent of the entire Indian population; therefore the active support of the peasantry will be the determining factor in the struggle against imperialism. The national revolutionary party will not have the support of the peasant masses unless it advocates a radical change in the present land ownership which ruins the peasantry. The British power in India is traditionally based upon the landowning classes. Abolition of landlordism, nationalisation of land and ensuring land to the tiller for cultivation will release the revolutionary energy of the peasant masses and will be a blow to imperialism.

The power of the revolutionary democratic national state will not be secure if British imperialism and native bourgeois dominate the economic life of the country through the possession of the means of transportation, basic industries and finance. Therefore these should be brought under democratic control as a result of the national revolution. Large productive concerns, like tea plantations, built up by Indian labour but owned by British capital should be confiscated and become national property.

#### V. THE AGRARIAN PROBLEM

23. National revolution in the colonial and semi-colonial countries is essentially an agrarian revolution. The agrarian problem is the fundamental problem of the Indian revolution. In spite of the fact that, unlike China, India is a modern capitalist state (The League of Nations places India among the eight leading industrial countries of the world), she is overwhelmingly an agrarian land. Agriculture still remains her basic industry. Nearly 75 per cent of her population live on the land. The fundamental task of the revolution taking place in such conditions is to solve the agrarian question. The galvanisation of feudal relations, the backwardness of the agricultural industry and the bankruptcy of the peasantry are the results of capitalist (imperialist) exploitation of the generally pre-capitalist modes of production; therefore the agrarian problem in India cannot be solved inside the limits of capitalist

society, as was done by the European bourgeois revolutions. The bourgeoisie "freed" the serfs from feudal bondage, but they cannot free the peasantry from capitalist exploitation without hurting their own class. Indian national revolution is not a bourgeois revolution, because as such it cannot solve the agrarian question.

24. The agrarian situation is not uniform throughout the country. It varies from province to province. Between largescale capitalist farming (tea plantations, etc.), on the one extreme, to primitive community ownership, on the other, there exist multifarious forms of landownership. This lifeless stratification has been caused by colonial exploitation which hindered normal social development. (Before the British conquest, India had been for 700 years under the medieaval mussulman imperialism.) The land is overcrowded. Over 75 per cent of the population are engaged in the cultivation of land. Millions of families must earn their livelihood from two acres of land broken into small fragments.

In nearly half of British territories the land is owned by landlords who generally possess more or less feudal character. The landlords pay to the government tax, fixed of their perpetually (as in Bengal) or for a certain period. The landlords' lands are rented out to tenants. Often there are a whole series of non-cultivating middlemen between the landlords and the peasants. In some places the tenancy is fixed subject to increase of rent, in other the landlord can oust the tenant any time. Often nearly the half of peasants production goes away in the form of rent and feudal dues. In the native states covering one-third of the entire country, the landownership is feudal. Practical serfdom obtains there.

In another half of the British territories the ownership of land is vested in the state which rents out the land directly to the tenants either individually or collectively. The rent is usually as high as 35 per cent of the gross produce. The peasants are not secure on the land. The rent is increased from time to time according to this valuation of the land. The peasants must leave the land if they do not

agree to pay the increased rent. In the backward regions (Sindh, north-western frontier provinces and partly Punjab) the old village communities, as such, however, have long been disrupted. The village has lost its economic self-sufficiency. Through trade and usury capitalism dominates the economic life of the remotest village.

25. The peasantry is deeply in debt. The total agricultural indebtedness of the country is calculated at about 6,000,000,000 rupees. There are about 240 millions peasants (including women and children) in the country. The interest in this debt is not less than 12 per cent on an average. Often the usurer charges as much as 200 per cent. In this situation the majority of the peasantry is practically in debtors' prison. The per capita (including women and children) indebtedness of the peasantry is 25 rupees as against the annual income of 27 rupees. This is bankruptcy. After harvest practically the entire produce of the land and his labour is taken away from the peasant in rent, taxes and interests. He borrows further from the usurer mortgaging the next harvest and his whole life.

This heavy and chronic indebtedness influences agricultural production adversely. The purchasing power of the peasantry sinks lower and lower. In order to check the process British government has introduced the system of cooperative credit. This only brings the peasantry under a more advanced form of capitalist exploitation.

26. The peasantry is revolting against this unbearable condition. Ever since 1918, agrarian discontent has grown more and more widespread taking violent expressions from time to time. In 1921-22 the country was the scene of actual peasant uprising. Gandhi's promise to begin a "no-tax" campaign raised the nationalist movement immediately to an acutely revolutionary level. The peasant masses flocked under the nationalist banner. When they began to act, they were not only violently suppressed by imperialism, but were betrayed and denounced by the National Congress led by Gandhi.

Imperialist repression supported by the counter-revolutionary attitude of the nationalist bourgeoisie, however,



could not liquidate the growing discontent of the peasantry. Sporadic peasant revolts take place every day in some or other part of the country. The situation is so serious that imperialism is forced to introduce some measures of juridical reform which, however, does not affect the situation essentially.

27. The task of the national revolution is to solve the agrarian problem—the basic problem of the country under present conditions. The national revolutionary party must give concrete shape to the objective demands of the peasantry. Only by mobilising the revolutionary energy of the peasant masses can the national revolution be successful.

The radical solution of the agrarian problem—that is, rescue of the peasantry from the present economic bankruptcy—demands liquidation of the remnants of feudalism and nationalisation of land as pre-conditions. Fighting for the realisation of this goal the peasantry must put forward the following demands: a) reduction of land to 10 per cent of the net production; b) fixity of tenancy; c) abolition of feudal dues; and d) repudiation of the peasants indebtedness. These partial demands must lead up to the demand for the abolition of landlordism.

The proletariat acting through the Communist Party must lead the peasantry in the struggle for the realisation of these demands. The Communist Party must organise the peasant masses in peasants' unions which should become the organs of agrarian revolution. The peasants' unions must be united into a national organisation to guarantee concerted action. The peasants' union should enter the national revolutionary party as collective members. Individual members for the communist party should be recruited from the leading elements of the peasants and unions in ever-increasing numbers. Agrarian revolution can take place in India only as a step towards socialism; therefore it must be under communist proletarian leadership. The petty bourgeoisie will go to a certain point; it may or may not go to the end. Unless the leadership of the peasant movement be completely communist, it will be betrayed by the petty bourgeoisie in the revolutionary crisis.

## VI. THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE NATIONAL REVOLUTION

28. The proletariat is the class, which under Indian conditions can alone solve the problems of the national revolution. Except under the influence of the proletariat, the petty bourgeoisie will not be able to carry on a revolutionary struggle against imperialism so necessary for the salvation of their own class from the present economic bankruptcy and political suppression. Left alone, they would fall victim to reactionary social ideology and would follow the bourgeoisie into the camp of counter-revolution. The basic problem of all problems, the agrarian question, cannot be solved by the bourgeoisie. They are against an agrarian revolution, because the Indian agrarian question cannot be solved within the framework of capitalism. The petty bourgeoisie independently cannot advocate an agrarian revolution because of their relation with a decaying form of landownership. They approach the agrarian question from a reactionary point of view (somewhat like the Russian socialist revolutionaries). They advocate resurrection of the village community system which has been long disrupted by capitalist penetration of village economy. Their programme of "village reconstruction" is utopian. The village is destroyed by capitalism. It cannot be constructed except as a part of socialist economy reared upon the ruins of the capitalist system. The slogans for the revival of village communities and village reconstruction are objectively, if not consciously counter-revolutionary because they defuse the class issues, obstruct the development of class struggle in the village. The peasantry themselves are too backward to be an independent political factor. They either follow the bourgeoisie when these latter struggle against feudalism for the establishment of capitalism; or become an ally of the proletarian leadership, agrarian discontent can sometimes be diverted in the channel of reformism thereby strengthening the position of capitalism. The present agrarian policy of British imperialism in India tends in this direction. The proletariat, being by its very nature divorced from all forms of

property, can alone lead the peasantry in the agrarian revolution.

Thus the relation of class forces places the proletariat in the forefront of the national revolution. The interests of the proletariat demands complete overthrow of imperialism, establishment of a revolutionary democratic state, relentless struggle against the compromising politics of bourgeois nationalism, revolutionary mobilisation of the petty bourgeois masses and agrarian revolution. The Indian national revolution can succeed only as an anti-capitalist movement; and anti-capitalist movement must be led by the proletariat. Reversely, because of the fact that the proletariat is the only class that can radically solve all the problems of the Indian national revolution, this is bound to outgrow the bounds of bourgeois revolution.

29. In order to accomplish this historic task the proletariat must operate through its own party. The Communist Party is an essential factor in the national revolution. It must act as a lever of the whole situation.

The first and foremost task of the Communist Party is to organise and train the proletariat to play its role in the national revolution. In spite of the fact that the Indian proletariat is objectively charged with a great political task, it is very young, politically immature and organisationally weak. Labour movement (trade unions) began in India hardly ten years ago. In this short time the proletariat have tasted the bitterness of class struggle. The strike-wave that swept the country in 1919-21, together with the simultaneous agrarian discontent, raised the nationalist movement immediately from impotent bourgeois reformism to the high level of revolutionary mass struggle which would have overthrown imperialist power had it not been sabotaged, misguided and finally betrayed by the petty bourgeoisie. Since then, in many a struggle the proletariat have learnt valuable lessons. The labour movement has been greatly freed from the domination of petty bourgeois nationalist politician. It is outgrowing the pernicious influence of the apostles of humanitarian social service and mutual help. Trade unions are becoming real proletarian

organisations—organs of class struggle. The proletariat will become more class conscious and ready for the revolutionary struggle only under the leadership of the Communist Party.

30. The trade unions are still weak. Only 25 per cent of the workers employed in large factories are organised. The millions and millions of transport workers, plantation coolies and handicraft workers are not yet organised. The 40 million of land proletariat are entirely untouched as yet. To assume the initiative for the organisation not only 5 millions industrial proletariat, but of the multitudes of land workers and handicraftsmen is the essential task of the Communist Party. While organising the unorganised masses, the Communist Party must penetrate the existing trade unions, develop their class character and capture the leadership.

In spite of the revolutionary spirit and fighting capacity of the proletarian masses (as demonstrated in many a big strike and lock-out) the trade unions are largely dominated by reformist theories. As a reaction to the domination of the labour movement by petty bourgeois nationalist politics, "economism" has gained considerable ground in the Indian labour movement. The theory is that the workers should leave politics alone and organise themselves to improve their economic conditions by collective bargaining and mutual help. This tendency is encouraged by imperialism, although the native bourgeoisie are generally hostile to trade unionism. Experienced in class struggle, imperialism knows that under proletarian influence the nationalist movement will become revolutionary; therefore it seeks to switch off the young trade unions into the blind-alley of reformism. In this imperialism receives the cooperation of the Indian liberal intellectual (objectively agents of the bourgeoisie) and of the reformist labour leaders of England.

The Communist Party must resolutely fight against all attempts to corrupt the Indian labour movement with reformism. The bourgeois liberal trade union leaders (Joshi, Chandrika Prasad, Chamanlal, Jhabwala, etc.) working under the influence of the "labour imperialism"

of the British Labour Party, should be exposed and denounced as agents of capitalism which they objectively are. The emissaries of British "Labour imperialism" coming to India to encourage and promote the growth of reformist labour organisations should be attacked and their sinister motive should be explained to the proletarian masses.

31. Even the disease of parliamentarism is penetrating the Indian labour movement. To tie the proletariat to parliamentarism in a country without parliamentary democracy, would be ridiculous, if it were not a conscious effort to misguide the young proletariat. Reformism in the labour movement is a by-product of capitalist prosperity. There is not much ground for reformists in India. The capitalist development of the country will be realised by exploiting the working class more intensely. If the standard of living of the Indian proletariat is allowed to rise. Industrialisation of India cannot be a means of the stabilisation of British capitalism. The economic conditions of the Indian proletariat cannot be improved unless imperialism is completely overthrown. Parliamentary institutions based upon an electorate embracing two per cent of the population cannot be the instrument which can be used even for legislation in favour of the working class. The present economic and political situation is antagonistic to the interests of the working class. This situation can be reformed only at the expense of the working class. Therefore, the task of the working class is not to find a *modus vivendi* in this situation, but to change it radically to make a revolution.

The Communist Party must explain this to the proletariat in popular literature, public meetings, trade union, clubs, etc. The proletariat can, however, be organised firmly and educated effectively only in actual struggle. The Communist Party must become the leader of the proletarian masses not only by explaining their historic role to them, by combating the reformist theories and by ideological propaganda, but also, and above all, by placing itself at the forefront of the class struggle, by fighting for the everyday demands of the proletariat.

32. In addition to the broad political issues of the national revolution such as overthrow of imperialism, revolutionary democratic state, agrarian revolution, nationalisation of mines, railways, heavy industries, etc., the labour movement must be developed in the struggle for the realisation of the following immediate demands: a) an eight-hour day; b) minimum wage; c) weekly payment of wages; d) defence of women and child labour; e) advanced social legislation; f) freedom of speech, press and association; g) right to strike. Demands for the protection of handicraft and land-workers should be added.

In the course of the struggle upon these partial demands it will be clear to the proletarian masses that even their elementary grievances cannot be remedied under the present political and economic situation. Thus, the elementary economic struggle of the working class will be developed into a political struggle, class-struggle will be the leaven of the nationalist struggle.

The Communist Party participates in the struggle for national freedom as the conscious vanguard of the proletariat. It must take active part in the development of the national revolutionary party of the proletariat, peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie. These forces of the national revolution are ready to be mobilised and led in the fight. The initiative can come and must come only from the proletariat.

#### VII. IMMEDIATE TASKS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

33. The basic task of the Communist Party is to organise itself as the political organ of the proletariat closely connected and consciously supported by the toiling masses. The Communist Party will be able to discharge its leading role in the national revolution only when it has accomplished the basic task. The Communist Party will win the confidence of the masses, will become the actual leader of the working class by actively participating in and leading the daily economic struggle of the proletariat and peasantry. Trade unions (already in existence and those

to be organised) and peasant unions should be the principal domain of communist activities.

While admitting in its ranks de-classed intellectuals, the Communist Party must be the party of the proletariat, not only in name, but in reality. The majority of the membership must be workers and peasants. The leadership of the party should be proletarianised as much as possible under the present Indian conditions.

34. Ideological development of the leading cadre of the party is an essential necessity. The Communist Party of India must have a thoroughly Marxian leadership in order to resist the penetration of reactionary ideology in the working class. There cannot be a Communist Party without communist theory. Reformism is growing rapidly among the liberal intelligentsia of India. It will corrupt the working class and obstruct the revolution if it is not combated from the very beginning. The Communist Party must be able to face the native Gandhism and imported fabianism with scientific Marxism. While it will be tactically inadvisable to attack religion in the beginning, the Communist Party must carry on an ideological struggle against the reactionary theory about the "spirituality" of Indian culture. India is full of theories ideolising pre-capitalist feudal culture (Gandhism, Tagorism "back to the village", etc., etc.). To expose the counterrevolutionary significance of these theories is absolutely essential for quickening the class-consciousness of the proletariat and to further the cultural progress of the entire country.

The Communist Party must build up a party press. The production and circulation of propaganda literature containing Marxian examination of all the aspects of the local situation which must be increased. The party press must picture the daily life of the proletariat and peasantry and should express the voice of the working class.

35. The Communist Party must take a leading part in the growth of a national revolutionary party (the Workers and Peasants Party). It must bring the workers and peasant masses under the banner of national revolution. The political importance of the petty bourgeoisie must

not be underestimated, but the national revolutionary party should not be allowed to drift under petty bourgeois ideology and leadership. The national revolutionary party must be based upon militant action of the masses under proletarian hegemony. Mass agitation must be carried on throughout the country. Mass demonstrations, political strikes, peasant revolts should be organised to back up the programme of the national-revolutionary party and the partial action—an economic strike in a small industry or the peasant movement in the remotest village should be connected with the broad political issues—overthrow of imperialism and establishment of revolutionary democratic power. Parliamentary struggle between imperialism and the nationalist bourgeoisie should be utilised to develop mass agitation.

The immediate tasks of the Communist Party of India are: a) To organise itself as the party of the proletariat; b) to capture the leadership and win the confidence of the proletariat and peasant masses by active participation in their daily struggle; c) to enlarge the party numerically by recruiting members from the proletarian and peasant organisations.

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## IX. THE SIXTH WORLD CONGRESS OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

### THESES OF THE AGITPROP OF THE ECCI\*

#### I. HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SIXTH CONGRESS

The sixth Congress met at the time of the opening of a new period. Behind it lies the period of a certain peaceful co-habitation of the imperialist powers; that of a certain peaceful co-habitation of the capitalist world and the USSR; that of some partial struggles between labour and

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\*Owing to technical reasons it has been impossible to publish the theses previously. Editor (of *Inprecor*).



capital in the imperialist countries; that of the first wave of colonial revolutions. Before it lies the new period, the period of sharp and bitter imperialist antagonisms, that of the imminent war danger between the imperialist giants: America and England; the period of particularly acute tension in the struggle between capitalism and the USSR; that of the completion of preparations for a war against the USSR; the period of the maturing of decisive class battles in a number of the leading countries (Germany, etc.); that of the rapid fusion of reformism with fascism; that of the decisive clash between reformism and communism over the leadership of the majority of the working class; the period of the deepening of the antagonism between the colonies and imperialism and the maturing of a new and still mightier wave of colonial revolutions.

2. To prepare the Comintern for the decisive historic events, to raise aloft the unfurled banner of communism as the fighting banner of the hundreds of millions of the exploited of all countries and continents, such was the task of the Sixth Congress.

The Sixth Congress has essentially accomplished these tasks.

a) The congress has worked out the programme of the Comintern, the programme of international communism, the programme of the struggle for the world proletarian dictatorship.

b) The congress has signalled the imminence of wars and revolutionary battles, and upon the grounds of this perspective, it has outlined the tactical tasks of the Comintern.

c) The congress in its discussion, has worked out a broad programme of action for the national-revolutionary movement in the colonies in the light of the lessons of the Chinese revolution having mapped out the fundamental tactical course to be taken during the imminent wave of revolution in India, and the basic directives of the Comintern to its sections in the colonial and semi-colonial countries of Asia, Africa and America. The Sixth Con-

gress was truly of world scope, more so than any previous congress, having revealed the international character of the communist movement and its organisations. None of the previous congresses had such a full representation of the countries of Asia, America and Africa. A whole number of parties in South America and Asia were for the first time represented in the Sixth Congress.

By adopting a common programme the congress has shown to the workers throughout the world that the aims of communism in the USSR, in advanced Germany, and in the backward countries of Syria or Indonesia, are identical. This international character of communism, this international solidarity of the communist movement was revealed with particular clearness by the fact that the Sixth Congress happened to coincide in time with the Brussels Congress of the Second International.

3. National-reformist parties grouped on the same principles as their respective imperialist masters, at loggerheads with each other in their anxiety to gain the moral support for "their own" respective bourgeoisie—such are the "Sections" of the Second International. Their congress showed unity only when it decided:

Firstly, to back the imperialistic League of Nations, to tell the masses that the League of Nations afforded a guarantee against war;

Secondly, to declare a "holy war" against the first proletarian republic and against communism;

Thirdly, to take a stand against the representatives of the oppressed peoples of the colonies and semi-colonies and to defend the monopoly of the imperialists of America and Europe to plunder hundreds of millions of people in the colonies.

The reformists proved international only to the extent that their imperialist masters are international.

As against this imperialistic internationalism of the reformists, the true internationalism of proletarian communism was shown by the Sixth Congress, thereby rendering tremendous service to the communist parties in their struggle against reformism.

## II. THE PROGRAMME OF THE COMINTERN

4. The congress has accepted the programme of the Communist International. Upon entering into the period of decisive class battles, the Comintern unfurls the militant banner of communism.

The programme of the CI constitutes an historic landmark in the history of the international labour movement. After the *Communist Manifesto*, the programme of the CI essentially represents the first international programme of communism. The programme of the CI continues the glorious traditions of the *Communist Manifesto*, which pointed out the inevitable doom of capitalism and which taught the proletariat that the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship are the postulates of socialism.

However, at the same time the programme of the CI constitutes also a big step forward in comparison with the *Communist Manifesto*. The *Communist Manifesto* was merely the programme of a handful of progressive individual workers of the period of the bourgeois revolution; the *Communist Manifesto* was only the grand scientific prophesy of the doom of capitalism. The programme of the CI constitutes the programme of the International Communist Party which is fighting in the period of social revolution, the programme of the party which has already one of its detachments engaged in carrying out the building of socialism.

The programme of the CI is the weapon of the struggle. The programme of the CI constitutes a brilliant illustration to Marx thesis that "an idea, having captivated the masses, becomes a material force".

5. What are the fundamental features of the programme?

The Comintern programme is a scientific programme. Its method of analysis is the dialectical method of Marxism and Leninism. It uses this dialectical method to analyse the origin, development and doom of capitalism. It uses this method to reveal the struggle of the classes and

the historic role of the proletariat as the gravedigger of capitalism and the builder of socialism.

6. The programme is based upon the analysis of world economy as an integral whole. Analysing world capitalism, the programme characterises the process of the emergence of the latest stage of capitalism—imperialism:

“Creating a gigantic socialisation of labour and the organisational postulates of socialism. Imperialism, by accentuating the intrinsic antagonism among the ‘great powers’, engenders wars which lead to the break up of the uniform world economy. Imperialism therefore constitutes decaying and moribund capitalism. It constitutes the ultimate eve of the world social revolution.”

Yet whilst analysing the world economy as an integral whole, whilst purring forward the uniform goal for the whole Comintern—the struggle for the world proletarian dictatorship, the programme at the same time sees variety in this uniformity—the variety of stages and forms of the world social revolution. The programme is based upon the Leninist doctrine of the uneven degree of political and economic development under imperialism, and it therefore established three types of countries in regard to revolutionary development.

To the first type belong such highly developed capitalist countries (Germany, Great Britain, North America, etc.) where the direct transition to the proletarian dictatorship is possible, as well as necessary, where the complete confiscation of the whole big industry, of the banks, the railways etc., the organising of a considerable number of Soviet estates in the rural districts will be a task of first class importance; where the material conditions for a relatively insignificant amount of elementary marketing relations, for a rapid peace of socialist development generally and the collectivisation of peasant economy in particular exists.

To the second type belong such countries of a medium level of capitalist development (Spain, Portugal, Poland, Hungary, the Balkan countries, etc.) with considerable remnants of semi-feudal relations in agriculture, with a

certain minimum of material pre-requisites which are necessary for socialist construction, with a not yet fully completed bourgeois democratic transformation. In a portion of these countries a process of more or less rapid growing over of the bourgeois-democratic revolution into a socialist revolution is possible; in other revolutions of the type of proletarian revolutions are possible, but with a great number of not yet solved tasks of a bourgeois-democratic character.

To the third type belong the chief colonial countries (China, India, etc.) where a certain development of industrialisation exists, but in the majority of cases it is still inadequate for purposes of independent socialist construction. The transition to the proletarian dictatorship is possible here only after passing through a series of preparatory stages, and only as a result of the growth of the bourgeois-democratic into the socialist revolution.

Providing that they get "direct support from the countries of the proletarian dictatorship", these countries may cover the road to socialism, "skipping over the phase of the further development of capitalism as the predominant system".

7. Bearing in mind that the international social revolution is made up of "processes varying in time and in nature of purely proletarian revolutions; revolutions of the bourgeois-democratic type growing into proletarian revolution; national liberation wars, and colonial revolutions"—the programme does not tackle the problems which confront the separate groups of the Comintern sections. The struggle for the leadership in the Indian revolution is considered in the programme from the same standpoint as it considers the struggle for the leadership of the German or French working class.

The international character of the programme is one of its essential features by which it distinguishes itself from the programme of the Second International. The Second International has not, and undoubtedly does not create its own programme, because it is torn by the same national antagonisms as is international imperialism. The Second

International has an international "idea"—to save the capitalist order from the proletarian revolution. Yet, it dares not come forward openly with such an international programme. Besides, as soon as concrete tasks (ie strategy and tactics) are taken up, the parties of the Second International will be bound to quarrel, because each one of them considers its respective bourgeois fatherland as the standard-bearer of civilisation, democracy, etc.

8. The programme bases the tasks of the proletarian dictatorship upon the ten years experience of the USSR. As against the regime of capitalist exploitation and oppression, as against the regime of corrupt bourgeois democracy, the regime of class, of national, and sexual inequalities,—it points to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, where the basic means of production are in the hands of the working class, where real democracy exists, where real national and sex equality exists. As against capitalist anarchy, the mad scramble for armaments and the colonial plunder practised by imperialism,—the programme points to the peaceful, planned building of socialism in the USSR, demonstrating to the oppressed mankind that it is possible and necessary to build socialism even in one country in which power has passed into the hands of the proletariat, and in which the dictatorship of the proletariat prevails.

As against the reformist doctrine of peaceful evolution into socialism, of class harmony and coalition during the transition period—the programme advances the Marxian doctrine of the proletarian dictatorship as the transition stage from capitalism to socialism. Upon the experience of the October revolution, and the civil war in Russia and in other countries.—the programme points out the need of the struggle for power and the destruction of the bourgeois state, demonstrating that not only is the peaceful socialisation of the means of production impossible, but that even after the capture of power, the exploiters will not give up their attempts at regaining by armed force the factories and workshops expropriated from them, at wrecking the work of socialist construction, etc., and that

therefore "without crushing the resistance of the exploiters, it will be impossible to create the postulates for socialist construction".

Having attentively studied the experience of socialist construction in the USSR, the congress has given us in the programme clearcut instructions as to the ways and methods for the building of socialism during the period of the proletarian dictatorship. The programme, whilst admitting the probability of war communism in view of the possibility of military intervention by the imperialists and a protracted revolutionary war—states categorically at the same time that the policy of war communism cannot be considered as "the 'normal' political-economic policy of the proletarian dictatorship", that rather is the NEP to be looked upon such policy as a fundamental bulk of the peasantry during the process of socialist transformation.

9. In the course of the discussion on this question the tactics during the period of war communism were thoroughly thrashed out and the mistakes which occurred, for instance, in the course of the Hungarian revolution, were thoroughly examined. Comrade Varga declared that war communism was inevitable, and argued for instance, that the defeat of the Hungarian revolution could not have been prevented even if the proper policy had been pursued by the Hungarian Communist Party. Comrade Bukharin in his reply, pointing out the mistakes in the Hungarian revolution—the lack of decisiveness in the agrarian question, as regards the confiscation of the landowners estates and the distribution of the land among the peasants—demonstrated that there is no basis for the assertion that if a proper policy had been pursued in regard to the peasantry (the policy which strengthened the Red Army and undermined foreign white-guard armies), the military intervention might not have been prevented.

10. After minutely examining the strategy and tactics of the proletarian state, the programme goes on to give directions to the communist parties which are struggling for power. In the first place the programme has exposed

of the third period. It is necessary to establish the fact—and this was done already in the political report of the Fifteenth Congress of the CPSU—that capitalism has managed to surpass the pre-war level of production. It has succeeded to restore the economic relations in various parts of the world and considerably reconstructing the capitalist economy in a number of countries. At the same time, however, the chief contradiction of capitalism was revealed—the contradiction between production and market conditions. This gives rise to the greatest disturbances: “From the very fact of stabilisation, from the fact that production increases and trade grows apace, from the fact that the technical progress and the production capacities are increasing, while the world market and the spheres of influence of the different imperialist groups are still remaining more or less stabilised—from this very fact arises a new, profound and most acute crisis of world capitalism which is fraught with new wars and which menaces the very existence of any stabilisation whatsoever.” Such are the dialectics of the development of capitalism during this new period, which were demonstrated already in the political report to the Fifteenth Congress.

13. The unparalleled growth in the antagonisms among the imperialists, such is the first feature of the new period. The crux of these contradictions is the contradiction between the still ascending capitalism of America on the decaying capitalism of Great Britain. In Canada, in South America, in the Far East, in Europe, everywhere these two giants clash, and the more acute the discrepancy in America itself becomes as a result of the development of the forces of production and the marketing possibilities, the more rapidly we find American imperialism throwing off the mask of pacifism. It is because of the outlook of a coming clash with America that imperialist Great Britain is endeavouring to renew the entente, signing a pact with France not only with regard to further armaments, but also on a number of other important international questions (the policy in the Balkans, the occupation of the Rhine, etc.). The new cycle of imperialist wars, described



by Lenin in his last articles, is approaching with ever increasing rapidity.

14. The fight for markets and for spheres of investment increases the activity of the imperialists against the Soviet Union. What is most characteristic of the new period is the danger of an imperialist war against the USSR. The existence of the Soviet Union interferes with the capitalist offensive on the working class, lends strength to the colonial peoples in their struggle against imperialism, and renders exceedingly risky (for capitalism itself) an outbreak of war among the imperialists themselves.

Since the Soviet Union is also reconstructing the national economy upon a new technical basis, carrying out grand plans of socialist construction in town and country, thereby inspiring the workers throughout the world to struggle for socialism, it is easy to see how vitally the imperialists are interested in the question of destroying the USSR. Beginning with the rupture of the Anglo-Soviet relations, the preparation for war against the Soviet Union constitutes the most important axis of the whole of the international policies. Under the leadership of British imperialism there are systematic preparations in progress for an attack upon the USSR. By arming Poland, Rumania and other "neighbours", by bolstering up their economic organism by means of loans, by gradually attracting Germany as a "neutral" ally, British imperialism—with the benediction of the other "great" imperialist powers—is merely waiting for a convenient tactical moment to unleash its dogs of war against the Soviet Union.

The congress emphasised most sharply the task of preparing for defence against this attack and urgently raised the question of the fight against social democracy, which is ideologically preparing the new war.

15. Along with this menace of imperialist wars, the new period is characterised by the fact of imperialist wars against the colonies. What is now being done by Japan in China, what has been done by America in Nicaragua, etc. etc., all this constitutes undisguised warfare. The clearer the basic antagonisms of imperialism are brought

to light, the larger the growth of the revolutionary consciousness of the colonial peoples, the more arrogant international imperialism becomes. But these imperialist wars are bound to accelerate the process of the awakening of the colonial masses. It is for this very reason that the colonial revolutions and movements are just as much a feature of the third period as are the wars of the imperialists against the colonies.

16. The war danger constitutes the very crux of the new period. To combat this war danger, is the very hub of the whole activity of the Comintern.

These tasks have been formulated in the Political Theses of the congress in the following words:

“The struggle against the menace of imperialist wars among the capitalist powers and of an imperialist war against the USSR should be waged systematically and day by day. This struggle is unthinkable without the decisive exposure of pacifism which represents under the present conditions the most essential weapon in the hands of the imperialists for the preparations of wars and for the concealment of such preparations. This struggle is unthinkable with exposing the “League of Nations” which constitutes the chief instrument of imperialist “pacifism”. Finally, this struggle is unthinkable without exposing the social democracy which helps imperialism conceal the preparations for new wars under the banner of pacifism. The constant exposure of the work of the “League of Nations” upon the basis of facts, the constant support of the disarmament proposals of the USSR and the exposure of “their own” governments regarding this disarmament question (questions raised in parliament, mass demonstrations in the streets, etc.), the constant elucidation of the facts concerning the actual arming of the imperialist powers, the chemical industry, the war budgets, the secret and open treaties and conspiracies of imperialism, the role of the imperialists in China; the exposure of the lies of the social democratic “real pacifists” concerning ultra-imperialism and the role of the “League of Nations”; the constant elucidation of the “results” of the first world

war, of its secret preparation—military and diplomatic; the struggle against pacifism in every shape, and the advocacy of the communist slogans—above all, the slogan of the defeat of “one’s own” imperialist fatherland and the transformation of imperialist war into civil war; the activity among the soldiers and sailors, the creation of illegal nuclei, the activity among the peasants,—such should be the basic tasks of the communist parties in this respect.”

17. The aforesaid international external contradictions, are intertwined with internal, class contradictions within the imperialist countries. Furious competition drives the imperialists in every bourgeois country to increase the pressure upon the toiling masses.\* Combining into cartels and trusts, enjoying open backing of the governmental apparatus which is more and more resorting to fascist methods, and making use of the social democracy and its trade-union bureaucracy—the imperialist bourgeoisie increases both the political and the economic oppression. The rationalisation of production, the intensified draining of the vital strength of the working class; longer working hours and lower wages in a whole number of countries; compulsory arbitration (Germany, Sweden, Norway, etc.) which deprives the working class of the freedom to strike; trade union laws which curtail the rights of the latter; laws for the militarisation of the population, and parliament bills restricting the suffrage rights of the toilers; finally, the open attempts at prohibiting the communist parties and the sympathising organisations,—such are the characteristic economic and political measures employed by the bourgeoisie to increase the exploitation of the working class and to protest itself against mass actions in the present and in the future.

The bourgeoisie has almost entirely dispensed with the use of the mask of democracy. The dictatorship of the

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\* This is revealed with particular clearness in decaying England and in the economically regenerated Germany who is deprived of her former military and political might and is “so far” constrained to make particularly energetic use of the economic weapon of competition.

big bourgeoisie reveals itself quite openly. Even in those countries (eg Germany) where the bourgeoisie is forced just now to put some of its S.D. flunkeys in ministerial chairs, it openly declares that it will not countenance the least departure from its own big bourgeois programme.

18. What is the effect of this pressure upon the working masses? The elections which have taken place in the largest European countries (Germany, France, Poland) have shown that not only does the curve of communist development not go downward—as was the case during the major part of the second period—but on the contrary, it rapidly ascends. The elections have shown the growth of the influence of the communist parties to have been particularly considerable in the large industrial centres and in the capital cities of Europe. In spite of all the machinations, the revolutionary opposition in the trade unions is ousting the reformists from responsible positions, steadily and step by step, having been particularly successful in regard to capturing the factory committees.

The growth of the industrial conflicts, the class solidarity of the proletariat in these conflicts, the growth of the militant organisations of the proletariat (Red Front associations, etc.), the powerful May Day mass demonstrations, the elementary desire for an alliance with the proletariat of the Soviet Union which breaks all the reformist barriers—all these and many other facts demonstrate that we have to deal with a rapid process of the gathering of the forces of the working class; the process of radicalisation.

19. Increased preparation for the coming struggles implies in the first place an increased fight against the social democracy. The growth in the imperialist aspirations of the bourgeoisie strengthens the threads which tie the social democrats to their respective imperialist states. The more acute the rivalry among the imperialists, the more acute the class antagonisms, the more “cordial” become the relations between the bourgeoisie and the social democracy of a given country. Social democrats are openly

advocating rationalisation for the sake of raising the competitive ability of "their own" national industry. Therefore they advocate "industrial democracy", "peace in industry", compulsory arbitration, etc. The social democrats are the heralds of the new imperialist offensive in the colonies under the mask of pacifism; they defend the imperialist League of Nations, and are attacking the USSR, trying to accustom the masses to the idea of the "legitimacy" of a war against it. The Social Democratic Party represents the agitprop of imperialism and a participant in the organisational preparations of war against the USSR. Becoming fused with the state, the social democracy is breaking down gradually all the barriers which separate it from fascism.

Albert Thomas, the social-democratic chairman of the International Labour Office, openly chants the praises of fascism. The Bulgarian, Hungarian, Polish, Italian and other social democratic parties are openly cooperating with fascism. Noske and the "old" social democrats in Germany, are openly taking part in bourgeois organisations of the fascist kind. The social democratic leaders in the "Reichsbanner" are cooperating with the "Stahhelm". The beating up of revolutionary workers by social democratic bands has become a common phenomenon not only in Poland, but also in Germany.

20. Becoming fascised, the social democrats openly take up the policy of splitting the labour movement. Particularly prominent in this respect has been the policy of the German social democracy. It has split up the sport movement (by the expulsion of the Berlin and Halle branches), the freethinkers' movement (with its 600,000 members) in which the communists were on the eve of winning the hegemony. It expels hundreds of militant communists from the trade unions.

Can under such conditions the tactics of the united front remain unchangeable in all its parts? Of course, it cannot. Invariable remains only our tactic of the united front from below, the united front with the social democratic workers. But it would be ridiculous now to pro-

pose a united front to the social democratic leadership which is becoming fascised, and which is splitting up the labour movement. Our tactical line should be to wage a relentless fight against the social democratic leaders.

Particularly important under the conditions of the growing revival and intensification of the class antagonisms is the task of exposing the treachery of the so-called left wing social democrats. Having branded these left wing phrasemongers as "the most dangerous vehicle of bourgeois policy within the working class, as the most dangerous adversaries of communism and the proletarian dictatorship", the congress has thereby categorically rejected the waverings of right wing groups in a number of sections and has laid down the clear line of the fight against reformism.

Upon the very ground of the imminent intensification of the struggle against the social democracy, the congress has confirmed the decision of the IX Plenum of the ECCI which made a turn in the French Party, recommending it to give up the united front with the socialists in the elections, to carry on the electoral campaign under the slogan of "class against class"; the congress further confirmed the decision of the IX Plenum of the ECCI which made a tactical turn in the English Party in regard to the Labour Party which has become transformed from a shapeless labour organisation into an ordinary Social Democratic Party.

Whilst never giving up for a moment the policy of the united front with the social democratic workers everywhere, the communist parties should increase the struggle against the social democratic leaders in all the organisations, particularly in the trade unions. Upon the precise grounds of the imminent intense struggle against reformism for the leadership of the working class, the congress emphasised once again the importance of energetic activity in the trade unions, of the constant raising of the class line of the revolutionary trade-union opposition as against the reformist policy of the trade-union bureaucracy. A passive attitude at a moment when the reformists are

expelling hundreds of communist leaders or are splitting up entire organisations would be nothing short of surrender.

21. The stabilisation period, the period of "petty", everyday work in the trade unions, cooperatives, and municipalities; the period of the struggle against the ultra-lefts was bound to endanger right wing moods, right wing deviations, chiefly among the elements in the sections who are connected with trade union, cooperative, municipal, and parliamentary work.

This opportunistic deviation made itself felt in every section in one shape or another. In France it revealed itself in opposition to the electoral slogan of "class against class"; in England it was expressed in hesitation and in the improper application of the policy of strengthening the struggle against the Labour Party and of independent action by the Communist Party in the coming elections; in Germany it was expressed in the advocacy of the slogan of "control over production", in the refusal of communist trade union workers to speak against the reformist strike strategy and the reformist views on the question of compulsory arbitration, in attempts to make a distinction between right and left social democrats, and so on.

These opportunist deviations become highly dangerous just now, in the period of imminent wars and revolutionary mass fights. If we bear in mind that these opportunist elements are likely to be swayed by nationalist sentiment, if we recollect that in the majority of the sections the parliamentary traditions be contained in this deviation of certain party elements at the decisive moment of the struggle against bourgeois war and reformism, unless we start the fight against the right wing opportunist deviations.

22. A serious warning to a number of sections should be furnished, for instance, by the crisis in the Czech party.

The Czech CP in the course of many years has conducted great activity among the masses, having managed to rally nearly a million toilers to the electoral standards of the party. Yet when the moment of sharp mass action

ensued when it was necessary to pass on from the methods of "peaceful" agitation to leadership of the mass economic fights under the conditions of the utmost upheaval of the masses (the movement against the Social Insurance act), when it was necessary to mobilise the party and the masses against the agrarian demonstrations of the government, against the political terror—the party and the Red trade unions showed an opportunist attitude of passivity and did not find themselves at the head of the masses, with the result that the confidence of the masses in them was shaken.

23. Congress has quite clearly tackled the question of the right wing danger as the chief danger. Whilst recording the complete ideological as well as organisational defeat of Trotskyism and the collapse of its ultra-left allies, the congress opened fire chiefly upon the right wing. The congress has established at the same time that in a number of sections—above all, in the German section—there are certain conciliationist groups, who display an excessive tolerance towards the right wing opportunist elements. The Congress has put before the sections the task of the absolute elimination of the conciliatory tendencies as the indispensable condition for the successful struggle against right wing deviations.

#### IV. THE COLONIAL QUESTION

24. Whereas the Brussels Congress of the Second International was engaged in defending the colonial policy of imperialism in the eyes of the toilers in order to work out the most "refined" methods of enforcing this policy, playing the role of broker and suggesting to the colonial peoples to be contented with a constitution or an autonomy and give up their revolutionary struggle—the Sixth Congress, carefully analysing the lessons of the colonial revolutions, has mapped out the most successful way for the revolutionary struggle of the colonial workers against imperialism and the survivals of feudalism.

25. Since the time of the Second Congress, when in the



Theses of Comrade Lenin the fundamental and strategical directions were given upon the colonial question, there have occurred considerable changes and a tremendous fund of experiences has been accumulated.

First of all, during these years the proletariat has entered upon the arena of the class struggle in the colonies, having become in a number of colonial countries the fundamental revolutionary force which is leading considerable elements of the peasantry in the revolutionary struggle.

Secondly, during these years a number of colonial insurrections and movements have occurred, eg the agrarian riots in India, the insurrection in Indonesia, the national wars in Morocco, Syria, Nicaragua, etc.

Thirdly, during these years the great Chinese revolution has developed, which has aroused tens of millions of workers and peasants to the struggle and has bestirred all the oppressed peoples.

Fourthly, during these years the "South American" problem has matured, the national revolutionary movement has begun in the semicolonial countries of South America.

26. The Second Congress gave a general analysis of the colonial question. The Sixth Congress has supplemented it by a study of the tactical problems in regard to the individual colonial countries and groups. The different degree of their revolutionary struggle has necessitated a concrete analysis of the individual groups and countries. The experience of the revolutionary struggle urged the examination of such questions as the question of the non-capitalist mode of development in the colonies, the question of the attitude towards the bourgeoisie, and so forth.

Summing up the results of recent years and surveying the present situation, the Congress observed that Lenin's prediction about the unfoldment of the colonial revolutions has been fully borne out.

In China (where the first wave of the revolution aroused the proletariat and the peasantry of a number of provinces to take part in the struggle) although the bloc of the imperialists, the feudal elements and the bourgeoisie has been

temporarily triumphant, there are still isolated fights going on even today. The general situation may be characterised as "the period of the preparation of the mass forces for a new rise of the revolution" (Para 27, The Political Theses).

In India we see the revival of the national-revolutionary movement, a revival which bids fair to develop eventually into a veritable workers' and peasants' revolution.

27. Both in China and in India there can be observed two tendencies as regards solving the colonial and agrarian question: the bourgeoisie considers it to be its historic task to create a bourgeois state by means of reform and compromise with imperialism and the feudal elements (at the same time, as properly pointed out by the representative of the Indian Communist Party, Comrade Sikander, it is not averse to "utilising the workers and peasants as cannon-fodder").

As against this national-reformist, capitalist strategy, the Comintern advocates the revolutionary method of fighting against the imperialist yoke and the survivals of feudalism. The democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry which does away with all monopolies and with all the privileges of imperialism, which accomplishes the agrarian revolution and thereby creates (in alliance with the proletariat of the advanced countries) the postulates for the non-capitalist development of the colonial countries—such is the basic strategical slogan.

28. The congress has given a clearcut analysis of the role of imperialism in the colonies. In connection with the discussion upon this question number of comrades in their speeches criticised the assertion that India and other colonial countries constitute a "world village", that the colonial countries constitute a sort of "agrarian appendage" of the imperialist industrial countries. The comrades who criticised these views pointed out that, for instance, in India there is industrialisation going on, albeit under the control of British imperialism, and that imperialism has the tendency to shift the centre of production to the colonies.

The logical development of such assertions is to lead up to the theory of "decolonisation". But to recognise the "decolonisation" and industrialisation of the colonies would essentially mean to give up Lenin's thesis concerning the nature of colonial exploitation. To be sure, there is a certain industrial development going on in the colonies. But this industrial development does not yet signify industrialisation. The industrialisation of a country means the development of the production of the means of production (machinery, etc.) in that country, whereas imperialism allows in the colonies only the development of small manufacturing industries engaged in the conversion of agricultural produce. It deliberately hinders the development of the production of the means of production. But imperialism checks the industrialisation of the colonies not only hindering the development of the production of the means of production; it checks progress by the whole of its policy of supporting the survivals of feudalism in the village and by the innumerable taxes which ruin the already impoverished peasantry.

The road of independence and self-reliance for the colonies leads across the revolution of the workers and peasants which establishes the democratic dictatorship—the leyer of industrialisation and the non-capitalist development of the country and by the further merging of the democratic into the socialist revolution. Industrialisation of the present colonies is possible only along the path of their non-capitalist development.

29. The second big problem confronting the congress was the question of the attitude towards the bourgeoisie. It was necessary to sum up the lessons of the Chinese revolution and to map out the tactics of the Communist Party in the forthcoming Indian revolution. In the political theses the basic advices were given to the Indian comrades. What are the peculiar features of the class struggle in India, particularly the struggle for hegemony between the Indian bourgeoisie and the proletariat in the national-revolutionary movement, which distinguishes India, for instance, from the China of prior to 1927? These

peculiar features may be described as follows: the Indian bourgeoisie as a class is no doubt more consolidated economically and politically, and more mature than was the Chinese bourgeoisie; whereas the proletariat, although more numerous than in China, is politically still under the influence of bourgeois nationalism.

A section of the Indian bourgeoisie—and the most influential one—has already taken to the path of compromise with British imperialism; another section (the swarajists), as pointed out in the Political Theses of the congress, is “substantially looking for an understanding with imperialism at the expense of the toilers”. All the tendencies of the Indian bourgeoisie have already betrayed the agrarian revolution of the peasantry, in the past, and in the future they are only likely to play a counter-revolutionary role.

“The combination of the communist elements and groups into a strong Communist Party, the combination of the proletarian masses in the trade unions, the systematic struggle within the latter with a view to the complete exposure and expulsion of the social-treacherous leaders from all the trade-union organisations is the most indispensable task of the working class in India, and the indispensable condition for the revolutionary mass struggle for the independence of India (Para 28 of the Political Theses). Such is the first task of the Indian Communist Party. The struggle for the proletarian hegemony in the national struggle against imperialism and the remnants of feudalism, such is the second task of the Indian Communist Party as the vanguard of the proletariat, because “only under the leadership of the proletariat will the bloc of the workers, peasants and the revolutionary portion of the intelligentsia be in a position to smash the bloc of the imperialists, landlords and the compromising bourgeoisie, to unfold the agrarian revolution and to break through the imperialist front in India.” (Para 28 of the Political Theses.)

Hence it is clear—and this was pointed out by comrade Stalin, already in 1925, in his address on the political

tasks of the Communist University of the Toilers of the East—that in order to smash this bloc it will be necessary “to concentrate our fire against the compromising national bourgeoisie, expose its treachery and emancipate the toiling masses from under its influence.” (Cf. *Questions of Leninism*, p 265).

Such is the general tactical line of the Indian Communist Party.

#### V. ON THE SITUATION IN THE CPSU AND IN THE USSR

30. The congress summarised the activity of the proletariat and its party in the USSR for the reconstruction of the national economy, outlining the fundamental features of the further socialist construction.

The congress has recorded its particular satisfaction that in the country of the proletarian dictatorship, in the USSR the party of the proletariat, the CPSU, having overcome in its ranks the social democratic deviation of Trotskyism, and having overcome a series of objective economic difficulties of the reconstruction period, achieved serious successes in the building of socialism in the USSR and proceeded to direct activity in the socialist reconstruction of peasant agriculture. The further activity of socialist construction in the USSR is contemplated along the lines of the industrialisation of the Soviet Union, the acceleration of the socialist construction in the village (the Soviet estates, the collective estates and mass cooperation of individual peasant farms), with the systematic realisation of the Leninist slogan of relying upon the poor peasants, forming an alliance with the middle peasants and fighting the kulak.

It was observed by the Congress that the CPSU has taken notice in time as regards the elements of bureaucratic petrification of some links of the state economic administration, the trade unions and even the party apparatus, waging a determined fight against these tendencies. The development of self-criticism, the intensification of the struggle against bureaucratism, the consolidation

of the forces and the unfoldment of the activity of the working class—the predominant factor of the entire revolutionary development in the USSR —such are the most outstanding tasks of the party in the USSR. The congress expressed its confidence that the party would emerge victorious not only from the economic difficulties due to the general backwardness of the country, but also with the help of the whole of the international proletariat from any outside conflicts which are so systematically prepared by the ruling circles of the imperialist countries. (Para 57 of the Political Theses.)

“The Sixth Congress confirms the decision of the Fifteenth Party Congress of the CPSU on the expulsion of the Trotskyists recognises at the same time that the measures following thereon with regard to the leaders of the opposition arose fully and entirely out of revolutionary necessity, and refuses the request of Trotsky, Radek, Sapronov and the other expelled persons to be readmitted into the party.”

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## X. ON THE INDIAN QUESTION IN THE SIXTH WORLD CONGRESS

M. N. Roy

The polemic against the so-called theory of “de-colonisation” cast a shadow of unreality over the otherwise high class discussion of the Indian question in the Sixth World Congress. Therefore it is necessary to begin with a few remarks about this theory: more correctly, about the scarecrow of this so-called theory.

I do not propose to answer the polemics of comrade Kuusinen and others. It will not be possible to correct the inaccuracies of facts cited in comrade Kuusinen’s report within the limits of an article. If necessary I will be prepared to do so in a future occasion. For the present it is

sufficient to observe that comrade Kuusinen was not well advised as regards facts. It is not the picture of the India of 1928, but of a quarter of a century ago that he drew before the congress. Thus he was bound to do because of his admitted "lack of the necessary knowledge of the entire subject". But he was certainly extravagant in imagination, if he sought to accuse me of having ever maintained, openly or by implication, that imperialism under any circumstance could be a progressive factor in the colonies. Happily, in the corrected version of his concluding speech he emphatically stated that he did not identify "this false theory (of de-colonisation) of our comrades" with the "apology of colonial regime made by the lackeys of imperialism". This eleventh hour statement, however, does not alter the fact that in his report he asserted that the comrades who maintained that there was a change in the economic policy of British imperialism in India, "even visualize de-colonisation of India by British imperialism". This is a misreading and misinterpretation of what I wrote even in this connection. The very passages quoted by comrade Kuusinen to condemn me as an apologist of imperialism, prove that I do not hold the opinion that British imperialism will lead the Indian people by the hand to freedom. What I pointed out is that owing to the decay of capitalism in the metropolis, imperialism is obliged to find means and methods of exploiting India more intensively, and is thereby creating a situation which weakens its very foundation. Comrade Kuusinen asks: if it is so, why is British imperialism doing such a thing? This is a very simple way of looking at the situation. It is trying to understand the operation of capitalism (in its highest stage of imperialism) separated from its inner contradictions. In the light of such simple logic Marx also becomes ridiculous by virtue of having said that capitalism creates its own grave-digger in the form of the proletariat. If capitalist mode of production lays down the conditions for socialism why did the bourgeoisie introduce it in society? These apparent contradictions are explained by Marxian dialectics. To have a correct appreciation of the situation it

is necessary to distinguish between the subjective and objective forces operating upon it. British imperialism does not wish to lose an iota of its power in India. This is the subjective factor which has very great significance; but it alone is not decisive. The objective factor, that is, what, in the given situation, is possible for the British bourgeoisie to do to maintain their domination in India and the effects of what they do, reacts upon the subjective force. If the subjective were the decisive factor, there would never be a revolution for the ruling class would never want to abdicate its power. There is of course the opposing subjective which wants to overthrow the existing order. But its wish alone is not sufficient. It can be realised when other objective forces are in operation on the situation. The degeneration of the ruling class, the decay of its system of production and the decomposition of its state-power are the objective conditions for a successful revolution. The establishment by a close analysis of facts that these objective conditions are maturing in India, in spite of the desire of British imperialism, does not prove, as comrade Kuusinen said, that "our conception of the nature of the imperialist colonial politics should be revised". On the contrary, Marxist and Leninist conception of the nature of imperialism does not exclude the maturing of conditions indicating degeneration, disorganisation and decay of imperialism as preliminary to its final overthrow. Otherwise, it would not be a revolutionary conception of the dynamics of the situation, but a static view without any perspective.

As is evident from the very passages quoted by comrade Kuusinen, I used the term "de-colonisation" (within inverted commas, because it is not my creation) in the sense that imperialist power is undermined in India creating conditions for its successful revolutionary overthrow. India is a colony of the classical type. She will never cease to be a colony until the British power is overthrown by revolutionary means. No compromise (however far-reaching) between the Indian bourgeoisie and the British imperialists will give real freedom to the Indian people.



These are all truism. But it is also true that India of today is not the India of a quarter of a century ago. It is simply ignoring facts to maintain that the Indian bourgeoisie is as economically suppressed and politically oppressed as twenty years ago. To recognise the fact that, simultaneously in spite of and with the satiation of imperialism. India now travels on a path of economic development closed to her previously, is not a violation of Marxist and Leninist conception of the nature of imperialism. On the contrary, such developments are not foreign to this nature. Indeed Lenin did presage such developments in the colonies towards the latest stages of imperialist domination. In showing the ever-growing parasitic character of imperialism he approvingly quoted the following from Schulze-Gaevernitz's book: "Europe will shift the burden of physical toil first agricultural and mining, then of heavy industry—on the black races and will remain itself at leisure in the occupation of bondholder, thus paving the way for the economic and later, the political emancipation of the coloured races." (*Imperialism.*)

What, after all, is imperialism? It is the domination and exploitation of the backward races by the bourgeoisie of other capitalist countries. It is so as far the colonies are concerned. Imperialism, as a whole, has a much wider scope. That, however, does not directly concern us here. For the purpose of dominating and exploiting the colonial people the same means and methods are not, cannot be, applicable always. The object of the imperialist rulers is to get the greatest possible profit out of the colonies. How this profit is derived is immaterial. The way British finance capital get profit out of its Canadian and Australian possession is different from the way it does the same from the east and west African colonies. The methods of exploitation applied in these are again not the same as in India. The change takes place not from place to place but from time to time as well. The methods of deriving profits from Canada or Australia today are not the same as they were previously. There is no reason why the same change should not take place in India, if the interest of imperial-

ism demands it or the exigencies of imperialism force it.

Instead of considering imperialism as something unchangeable state—a Marxist should examine it dialectically. By doing that we shall find its weakness more clearly, and thus be able to fight it more effectively. In this examination one should not squabble over the exact number of proletariat and blast-furnaces in India. What is to be established is the general tendency. Is India politically and economically exactly in the same position as twenty-five years ago? Can the means and methods of exploitation applied at the period meet the present requirement of British imperialism? Has there been any inner change in the position of British imperialism which forces it to adopt new means and methods of deriving profit from India? Is post war imperialism in the position to continue colonial exploitation in the pre-war forms? These are the vital questions to be answered; and the correct answer could be found only by an unprejudiced examination of facts—of the situation as it is.

Obviously, the crux of the question is the internal condition of British capitalism. This was hardly touched in the discussion of the Indian question in the congress. Colonial politics suitable to the interests of British capitalism before the war, cannot meet the situation in which British capitalism finds itself as result of the war. Modern empires are built on capital exported from the metropolis. Britain's ability to export capital depends primarily on the conditions of her industries at home. Therefore, an analysis of the economic situation in Britain should be the starting point of a serious discussion of the Indian question.

Capital is exported from a country when it is "overdeveloped", that is, when all the accumulated surplus cannot be invested there at sufficient profit. Investment in countries where capital is scarce, price of land relatively small, wages are low and raw materials are cheap, brings higher profits. (Lenin, *Imperialism*) How is the position of Britain today as regards export of capital? If the facts give an affirmative answer to this question, then we may

**not look for a far reaching change in the imperialist policy. For, in that case, imperialism would be still in its "normal" condition super structure of capitalist prosperity at home. But a different picture in Britain will necessarily mean a readjustment in imperial relations.**

It is an established fact that Britain suffers from underproduction. Her actual production is much lower than her productive capacity. In other words, Britain produces much less than she could produce. This forced limitation of production has been caused by shrinkage of market as result of the war and growth of industries in other countries. Since the conclusion of the war the total volume of British exports has never exceeded 80 per cent of the pre-war level. In contrast to this the British export trade expanded uninterruptedly during the period between 1880 and 1913. And it was in this period of trade prosperity that the empire was built up and consolidated. An expanding export of manufactured goods (and by far the largest portion of Britain's export has always been manufactured goods) was the main channel for the export of capital which, in its turn, founded and cemented the empire. Therefore, a decline of the export trade is bound to affect the solidity of the empire, unless some other means were found to counteract the weakness resulting therefrom. In other words, the colonial policy evolved in the period of prosperity no longer suits imperialist interests when the conditions on which that policy was based have changed. The colonies acquired and kept as reserve during the period of prosperity should now be so exploited as to make up for the decline in the home country. What will be the result of this policy, whether it will not ultimately defeat the very object with which it is launched, is a different question. The point here at issue is that changed conditions in the metropolis render the continuation of the old methods of colonial exploitation disadvantageous, and force upon the imperialist bourgeoisie a new policy irrespective of what they would rather prefer. On the question of the ultimate consequence of this policy, my condition is and has been that the new policy will create conditions which will facilitate the

disruption of the empire. To deduce from this clearly Marxist contention that I am of the opinion that the British bourgeoisie will willingly "de-colonise" India is simply absurd. What I said and what can be maintained without slightly violating the Marxist and Leninist views of imperialism, is that what undermines imperialist monopoly and absolutism, inevitably operates as a "de-colonising" force as far as India is concerned.

Now, if the fall in Britain's export trade were temporary phenomenon, then, it could not produce far-reaching consequences. So it is necessary to examine more closely the nature and extent of the present crisis of British capitalism. Authoritative capitalist economists themselves have admitted that it is not a passing phenomenon. It is admitted that the present crisis cannot be overcome in the 'normal' course of events. For example, the Liberal Industrial Inquiry Committee in its report published a few months ago remarks: "our exports have been obstinately stagnant in the post-war period and show no clear signs of any big recovery in the near future". The ominous nature of the situation becomes more evident when it is known that this admittedly permanent decline affects particularly the key-industries, namely, coal, iron and steel, cotton and shipbuilding; and these industries supply more than half of Britain's export trade. Discussing the depression in these key-industries the Liberal Industrial Inquiry Committee observes: "We cannot be sure that our staple trades will revive to their old dimensions." The grave significance of this situation can be fully judged when it is kept in mind that these staple industries were "the chief contributors to our export trade; and their expansion in the last century was the basis of our national development as a foreign-trading and foreign investing nations". (Ibid)

Similar opinions testifying to the permanence of industrial depression in Britain are forthcoming from other equally competent sources. So, not being a passing phenomenon it is bound to produce abiding consequences. The situation is particularly pregnant, for the process of decay

has attacked the most vital sport precisely those industries whose development contributed to Britain's growth as a foreign-investing (that is, imperialist) nation.

Let us examine the consequences of this basic fact in some details. The condition for the export of capital from a given country is its possession of more capital than can be invested at home at a sufficiently high rate of profit. The period, in which this condition obtained in Britain, coincided with the period of gigantic expansion of export trade. Between 1880 and 1913 the total amount of British capital invested abroad increased from 800 million pounds to 3,500 million pounds. Industrial prosperity at home led to enormous accumulation of capital all of which could not be profitably absorbed inside the country. It was so much so in Britain that since the eighties of the last century the amount of capital exported from Britain rose steadily every year till in 1903 it exceeded the amount invested at home. Ever since 1903 the ratio of capital exported to that invested at home increased by year, until the war disturbed the situation. Of the total capital issues in London in the period between 1903 and 1913 about three quarters were for overseas investment. In the year immediately before the war broke out the amount of capital exported by Britain was approximately 150 million pounds, whereas 36 millions were invested at home.

The picture changes after the war. The volume of overseas investment (including colonial) showed a decrease absolutely, and what is very important for our analysis, relatively to home investment. According to the editor of the *Economist*, Layton, (in his evidence before the Colwyn Committee on national debt and taxation) the total amount of capital exported in the five years preceeding the war was 863 million pounds in contrast to 466 millions in the same period after the war. Post-war annual foreign issues amounted to 135 millions pounds in contrast to the average 200 millions during the years immediately preceeding the war. The proportion of the total issues meant for overseas investment was 88 per cent in 1912, 62 per cent in 1924 and 31 per cent in 1927. Calculating on the basis of the figures

of the nine months the proportion in the present year will be below 30 per cent.<sup>1</sup>

One step further in the examination and we reach the source of the disease. Obviously, Britain exports less capital because in the post-war years she no longer possesses so much surplus capital as before the war. In other words, since the war, in Britain capital accumulates in a declining rate. It is not possible to find the exact extent of this decline. On the strength of several estimates made by competent authorities, the Colwyn Committee came to the conclusion that the total of the net national savings of Britain in 1924 was approximately 475 millions pounds as against 375 in 1913. Considering the fall in the value of money the figure should have been 650 to maintain the pre-war level. As it is, it shows a drop of over 30 per cent in the rate of accumulation. "The real savings exhibit a decline which may amount in present money values to something like 150 to 200 million pounds a year." (Report of the Colwyn Committee.) Now, the needs of the home industry (refitting of the old, and starting of new to make up for the incurable slump in the old) absorbs such a large proportion of the depleted accumulation that the surplus for export gets smaller. Thus, the very roots of British imperialist structure are in a state of decay. This must affect the entire structure, and the imperialist bourgeoisie must make a desperate effort to find new means to support the undermined edifice. In their frantic effort to stabilise a tottering structure they will hasten its collapse. Nevertheless, they must make the effort, otherwise they would not be what they are—they would not be bourgeoisie.

The decline of the rate of accumulation together with the increased demand for home leave very little capital for export. The following table illustrates the situation as compared with what it was before the war.

1. These figures are received by an analysis of the statistical material supplied by the board of trade, and London and Cambridge economic service.

	1913	1924	1927
	(in millions of pounds)		
Total issues	245.5	475	450.8
Home investment	49.7	350	314.6
Exported	195.5	125	135.2

Presently it will be shown that the figures of foreign issue in these years do not represent the actual amount of capital exported, which is very much less.<sup>2</sup>

With this knowledge of the inner condition of British capitalism one can explain why the flow of British capital to India subsided since 1923. The fact that since 1923 British capital exported into India reduced year after year and it reached an insignificant level does not India prove the hostility of the British bourgeoisie or any change of economic policy in India. The slackening in the tempo of industrial development in India is due to the fact that British imperialism is not in a position to provide the capital required for it. Its scheme is to mobilise the capital resources of India for the purpose. This is a very dangerous adventure, and the imperialist bourgeoisie must go slowly. There is, however, no change in the policy. There cannot be any change; for the policy is not the choice of the imperialist bourgeoisie. Inner contradictions of capitalism, accentuated by changed conditions, have forced it upon them. Lenin wrote: "Capitalism, in its imperialist phase, arrives at the threshold of the complete socialisation of production. To some extent it causes the capitalists, whether they like it or not, to enter a new social order, which marks the transition from free competition to the socialisation of production" (*Imperialism*). As the capitalist mode of production, in course of its development and as inevitable consequence of its development, creates the basis of socialist society so it is also possible that imperialism, in its last stages, is forced to adopt such methods

2. Taken from the board of trade journal and the labour research department monthly circular 1924 figures are represent The rough estimate of the distribution of the national saving made by the Colwyn Committee.

and forms of colonial exploitation as strike a death-blow to the very colonial regime.

In consequence of the fact that in the post-war years capital has been accumulating in the possession of the British bourgeoisie at a declining rate they are obliged to export capital in decreasing amounts. The check of the flow of capital to India in the last years is a reflection of this general decrease in the export of capital from Britain. The Liberal Industrial Inquiry Committee reports: "that the margin which remains available for making fresh investments abroad is materially lower than it used to be. In the last four years our surplus for foreign investment has been fully 100 millions per annum less, not only than it was before the war, but also than it was so lately as 1922-23." As the British bourgeoisie was obliged to devote the reduced exportable surplus, in the first place, to retain their control of the most vulnerable sections of the imperial front, very little was left for India. This fact, while immediately a check to the tempo of industrial development in India, renders the necessity of industrialising India more imperative. For, the whole imperial structure will crumble, unless the British bourgeoisie can find new sources of profit to set off the present decline in the rate of accumulation of capital at home, and India provides such a source if subjected to new forms of exploitation. The gap created by the industrial decay at home absorbs an ever increasing portion of the incomes from abroad. These, in their turn, again, have also decreased. "Our income from overseas investments was seriously impaired by the inroads which were made in these investments during the war in order to pay for munitions and necessary supplies from overseas." (Liberal Industrial Inquiry Committee) The report also testifies to a considerable amount fall in the real value of the income from shipping—another main source of income from abroad. Then, the operation of inter-allied war-debt payment leaves a debit account against Britain. Fall of export has swollen the adverse balance of British foreign trade to very large dimensions. On the other hand, the incomes from exter-



nal sources, with which the adverse balance of trade is met, has also decreased in real value. The position as compared to the pre-war year is as follows:

	1913	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927
	(in millions of pounds)						
Adverse trade balance	158	171	195	524	384	477	391
Net income from external sources	339	360	373	410	433	465	465
Net surplus available for investment abroad	181	189	178	86	54	12	74

This table shows that while the adverse trade balance has increased by nearly 150 per cent since 1913, the increase in the net income from abroad has been only 37 per cent. The consequence of this disparity is very serious inroads upon Britain's position as a foreign-investing, that is, imperialist country. For this alarmingly declining "surplus is the true measure of the net increase of our ownership of capital abroad". (Liberal Industrial Inquiry Committee.) The slight recovery in the last year does not represent the reality of the situation. The adverse trade balance is slightly decreased not as a result of an increased export, but of reduced import. Then the small increase of export in 1927 does not even make up for the heavy drop in the previous year. Indeed the two years average touches the lowest level of export. Further British imports being chiefly raw materials, their reduction will mean a further fall of export in the next year.<sup>3</sup>

3. After a partial irregular recovery in the first half of the present year, a heavy allround slump has recurred from September. Commenting on the situation the *Economist* remarks that "recent developments must be considered disappointing". Fall of exports has been accompanied by a further reduction in the import of raw materials. In the opinion of the *Economist* monthly trade supplement (October 1927) "it suggests that home manufacturers are not laying in supplies on the scale that they should be if trade were really making rapid and substantial progress."

From the above facts it is evident that Britain's ability to export capital has become very limited. Nevertheless, new foreign issues in London since 1925 show a tendency to increase. This is a new problem: where does the capital come from? The following table illustrates the anomalous situation.

	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927
	(in millions of pound)					
Net surplus from abroad	189	178	86	54	—12	74
Actual foreign issues	135	136	134	88	112	139

This table shows that until 1923 the foreign issues were within the limits of the exportable surplus. Since then the limits have been exceeded. This could have been done either by depriving the home industries of necessary capital or by transference to other centres of world finance (mainly New York) of foreign bonds held in London. If the former were the case, then it would prove that the parasitic nature of imperialism had developed to the extent of eating into its own vitals. But it could not be entirely so, for such large amounts of capital could not be sent abroad except through an increase of the export trade, which has not been the case in the last years. So the new foreign issues, at least the major portion of them, in the last years, must have represented transference of foreign securities, and, therefore were the measures not of an increase but decrease of Britain's ownership of capital abroad. The ominous nature of the increasing foreign issues becomes still more evident when it is known that according to the calculation of Cindersley, president of the National Savings Committee, made on the basis of informations received from 60 British banks and 160 companies *only 86 million pounds were available in 1927 for the purpose of investment both at home and abroad.* On the strength of all these facts it can be concluded that since 1924 British capital invested abroad has decreased by well over 300 million.

Now, let us see, how this alarmingly grave crisis of British imperialism affects its relation with India. Only from this perspective could we get a correct view of the situation. Any examination of the relation between India and British imperialism except in the light of the position of the latter as a whole is bound to be superficial. British policy in India is essentially determined by the internal conditions of British imperialism as a whole. It is not based on any other principle than to extract the greatest possible amount of booty. At present British imperialism must squeeze more out of India than ever. The profits cannot be appreciably augmented by the old methods of colonial exploitation. On the contrary, the old policy of keeping India forcibly in economic backwardness has been lately reducing the value produced by the Indian masses for the benefit of British imperialism.

At present India exports as much as before the war to buy much less. This is due to the disparity between the prices of agricultural products, which comprise the bulk of her exports, and manufactured goods which she imports. For example, now India imports cotton goods two per cent less, in volume, than before the war. Agricultural production per capita, also shows a decline.

And, to maintain her position as a first class imperialist power, Britain has lately been obliged to write off a considerable portion of the diminishing profit from India. The amount of tribute from India can be raised essentially on one condition, the production of greater value by the Indian toiling masses. This can be done only by the application of advanced means of production. In other words, with primitive agriculture as her main industry India cannot produce for British imperialism the increased revenue that is required by the latter to repair the decay of its foundation. Therefore modernisation of the means and methods of production in India has become the policy of imperialism.

The result of this policy is clearly visible to a Marxist. It will not only defeat its own object; but it will hasten the collapse of imperialism. And precisely therefore the

consequence of this policy can be characterised as having a "de-colonising" significance. It is simply absurd to say that recognition of the far reaching effect of the new economic policy forced upon British imperialism by its inner crisis, is analogous to believe that imperialism is becoming a progressive force. Such arguments may be useful for demagogic polemics; but it certainly betrays the ignorance of Marxian dialectics. Neither from the point of view of Marxian theories (their application to the realities of a given situation—not their quotation as dead formula) nor on the basis of the facts can it be proved that political and economic conditions in post-war India are the same as before the war. Nor can it be disproved that these changes have occurred and are occurring with the sanction of and under the guidance of imperialism. The march of India from the state of "dependency" towards that of a "dominion" is a fact. How long the march will last is a different question. The decisive feature of the situation is that under the present conditions it is advantageous for imperialism to transform India from an economically backward to an industrially developed higher type of colony producing greater revenue. Failure to see these essential characteristics of the situation will prevent us from determining correctly our tactics in the struggle against imperialism.

The tribute from India constitutes a considerable portion of the British income abroad. It is difficult to ascertain exactly the amount of revenue derived by British imperialism from India. On the basis of plausible estimates made by various people the rate at present could be calculated at 150 million pounds a year.<sup>3a</sup>

3a. "A close scrutiny of Britain's international trade" Shah and Khambata, "The Wealth and Taxable Capacity of India" estimates India's tribute to England to be 146.5 million pounds; comrade Varga's estimate is 167 millions; whereas other nationalist economists, Wadia and Joshi in *Wealth of India* put it at 80 million, balance sheet, as published, reveals the fact that the entire income from external sources is not usually accounted for therein. A reserve is kept which is not shown in the published accounts.

It can be assumed that a large portion of the income from India is put on the reserve account. For example, in the last several years only 15 million pounds were put under the head "Receipts Estimate of the Board of Trade of Journal from Services", while at least 20 million were derived from India alone and the same accounts. Further, the declining line of Britain's international credit touched the bottom in 1925, the international balance sheet showing debit of 12 millions in 1926. Nevertheless next year there was shown a credit of 74 million which was increased even to 96 million in a revised account of the board of trade published in the middle of 1928. But the improvement in the balance or actual trade did not correspond with the rise of credit, and the income from the external sources was shown as the same in the previous year. The reserve, in which considerable portion of the revenue from India is put must have been drawn upon to restore the equilibrium of the international balance sheet as published. All these prove that lot of book keeping jugglery throws a veil over the actual state of Britain's foreign income. Whatever may be the case, one thing is certain, that an ever increasing portion of the revenue from India has of late been absorbed to check the catastrophic fall in Britain's international credit. In this situation it becomes a pressing necessity to increase the revenue from India. Irremediable slump of the export trade and the resulting decline of British capital invested abroad seriously reduce the possibility of augmenting, even of maintaining the level of, the income from countries in which the operation of the forces of production is not completely dictated by British imperialism. The reserves of the empire must be drawn upon. Hence the scheme of "empire development", and India is given the most important place in that scheme. For, on the one hand, the application of this scheme to the self-governing part of the empire (Canada, Australia, South Africa, etc.) does not depend entirely upon the desire of the British bourgeoisie, and, on the other hand, in the more backward outskirts of the empire (new African colonies) the

application of this scheme will not immediately produce result of effective importance. Therefore, the largest and most precious jewel of the British crown must live up to its reputation. India must be economically developed to serve Britain's imperialist interests. Her enormous potential riches (accumulated wealth and wasted labour power) should be harnessed. This cannot be done unless her productive capacity is freed from the antiquated means and methods of colonial exploitation.

India pays her tribute to imperialism in the shape of her excess export. The surplus of her export over import, in the present conditions, represents what is taken away from her without giving anything in return. The balance of India's international trade was upset for the first time in 1920. In that year India's imports exceeded her exports to the extent of 790 million rupees.<sup>3b</sup>

(The average of surplus export in the five years proceeding had been 780 millions). Similar situations continued in the following year, causing terrible alarm for the imperialists. India was on the verge of bankruptcy. She failed to pay her "debts" to the colonial overlords. The antiquatedness of the pre-war forms of colonial exploitation stood revealed. It became clear that India must be allowed to raise her productive capacity, if she were to continue as a profitable domain of British imperialism. It was precisely in the years 1920-21, when India's bankruptcy became evident, that decisions were taken by imperialism to discard antiquated forms in favour of advanced ones for exploiting India.

Far seeing leaders of imperialism had already during the war been pointing out the need for a new course as early as 1915. Hardinge, the then viceroy of India, had impressed upon the British government, that after the war India must be helped to become an industrial country. The Indian industrial commission set up in 1916, on the above initiative of the viceroy, in its report publish-

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<sup>3b</sup>. 15 Rs are equal to 1 pound at the rate of exchange. In the year 1920 the ratio was 10:1.

ed two years later recommended that in the future the government should play an active role in the industrial development of India; that the raw products of India should be manufactured in the country into articles necessary in peace-time as well as in war; that agriculture should be modernised; that the government must abandon the old policy of "laissez faire"; and that all the available capital resources of India should be tapped for the purpose. The Reforms act of 1919, which introduced political conditions entirely unknown in pre-war India, also incorporated the new tendency. The Montagu-Chelmsford report, which constituted the basis of the act, contained the following:

"As the desirability of industrial expansion became clearer, the government of India fully shared the desire of the Indian leaders to secure the economic advantages that would follow local manufactures of raw products... If the resources of the country are to be developed the government must take action... After the war the need for industrial development will be all the greater... On all grounds, a forward policy in industrial development is urgently called for to give India economic stability... Imperial interests also demand that the natural resources of India should henceforth be better utilised. We cannot measure the access of strength which an industrial India will bring to the power of the empire... The government must admit and shoulder its responsibility for furthering the industrial development of the country."

In 1922 the government set up the Fiscal commission with an Indian industrial magnate as the chairman, and by accepting, in the beginning of the next year, its findings, that protective tariff should be introduced to help Indian industries, revised the traditional colonial policy formulated, in the word of Pitt "not a nail should be manufactured there"—in the mercantilist days with reference of the American colonies. The transformation of the British economic policy in India is testified by the fact that "protectionism" has replaced free trade. When British trade with India is on the decline, its freedom, main-

tained at the expense of India, no longer suits imperialist interest. As previously free trade meant industrial backwardness for India, now its reversion to protectionism must have the opposite effect.

Again be it emphasised that what is important to establish is the dynamics of the situation. The dominating tendency must be noticed. The obstacles to the full realisation of the policy, caused by other factors, do not disprove that the policy is there. While up to the war the policy of the British Indian government was to collect a customs duty *exclusively for revenue purposes* not exceeding 5 per cent *ad valorem* since the war the average level of the tax on imports has risen from 7.5 per cent in 1918 to 11 per cent in 1921, 15 per cent in 1922, 18 per cent in 1924 and it is nearly 20 per cent at present. The duty on iron and steel manufactures is still higher; besides, the industry in the country receives a bounty from the state. The result of protection to the iron and steel industry, the growth of which is the basic condition for the industrial development of a country, is noticeable from the following table.

*Production in India*

(in thousands of tons)

	<i>Pig-iron</i>	<i>Steel</i>
1913	207	32
1920	316	159
1924	891	340
1925	894	456
1926	927	457

(Comrade Varga, *Inprecor*, English Ed, Vol 8, No 45)

Although, owing to the operation of factors outside India, the tempo of industrialisation has been somewhat retarded since 1924-25, there has been jump in the production of iron and steel which lays down the conditions for an acceleration of the tempo in the near future. The potentiality of the situation is all the greater because this relatively considerable rise in the production of iron and



steel takes place in India when their production in Britain declines or stagnates. That there is a consummate policy of industrialisation, applied with caution so that the relation between India and Britain is not suddenly thrown out of gear, can be proved with abundant evidence. For instance, speaking in the Indian council of state on the Steel Protection bill (26 January 1922) the government spokesman, Charles Innes said:

“It is hoped to make the industry much stronger by attracting new capital and by inducing new firms to engage in it. Already India made the cheapest pig-iron, and we can look forward to the time when India will become an exporter of steel.”

In 1926, 150,000 tons of pig-iron were exported to Japan from India. The price was 37 shillings 6 pence per ton. At the same time the price in Britain was 79 shillings 6 pence. Obviously, industrialisation of India will help Britain to maintain her place in international trade.

The hope with which British imperialism adopted a new policy in the exploitation of India was not misplaced, as far as its immediate consequences are concerned.

“India has now become an important factor in the international trade in pig-iron, and has thus not only gained for herself a practically complete independence of all other countries as regards pig-iron, but has also become a very large exporter. The first stage, that is, the production of pig-iron in the use of enormous natural resources has thus been successfully passed.”

(British board of trade journal, 9 September 1926)

When it is known that India's deposit of iron-ores has been estimated at 2832 million tons.

This “successful” first stage open up before imperialism a very encouraging perspective. This enormous potential riches converted into commodities at such a low cost that it could be sold at a price less than half of the British level will mean indeed a very great “access of strength” for the empire. So industrialisation of India, in this period of capitalist decay in Britain —rationalisation of colo-

nial exploitation, so to say—is not incompatible with the basic principles of imperialism.

The severe crisis of 1921-1922<sup>4</sup> was tided over. The balance of India's foreign trade was superficially restored. It was done not so much by an increase of export as by a forced reduction of imports. Owing to India's inability to meet her "obligations" Britain was obliged to sell herself. This patchwork on the untenable relation between India and Britain had an unfavourable effect on the conditions of British industries. The limitation of the Indian market put an end to the post-war boom in Britain. The great increase in India's import trade—3,350 million rupees in 1922 as compared to 1,910 million in 1923—indicated a large export of British capital into India. To restore the balance of trade India's imports were reduced to 2,410 million rupees in 1923. The consequence was shown in the drop of British capital exported to India. Since then the situation has essentially been the same in which the channel of British capital to flow into India is restricted in addition to the basic fact that Britain's exportable surplus of capital is also very limited. In 1926 the exports regained its pre-war level, but the imports still remained very far from recovery. Remarking of this state of things the official report says:

"At present, about three-quarters of Indian export consists of agricultural produce, and the same proportion of her imports is made up of manufactured goods. With the existing disparity between the price of agricultural and industrial products, it is obvious that India has to make a greater productive effort, than she formerly did in order to secure the same volume of imports." (India in 1927-28.)

The reason for a change of the economic policy of imperialism in India is stated in the above quotation. The productive power of India must be increased, otherwise her capacity to buy will go down. The trade relation between India and Britain which is the main channel through which the latter extracts tributes from former, can

4. Geological Survey of India, 1922.

no longer be maintained in a state favourable to imperialism unless India can consume more commodities, and export enough to leave a considerable margin after the value of imports has been covered. The study of decline of British trade with India has been the cause of widespread alarm in the imperialists camp. Commenting on the subject the organ of the most die-hard section of the British bourgeoisie, those who are opposed to any change in the relation between India and Britain wrote: "Trade is the life and purpose of the Indian empire, if we loss that trade, we have neither the power nor the incentive to remain in India." (*The Morning Post*, London, 19 January 1926.) The paramount importance of trade is recognised not only by the mercantilists, but even by the financial and heavy industrial magnates whose views (in addition to those of the landed aristocracy) the *Morning Post* represents. From another section of the bourgeoisie views are also expressed appreciating the supreme importance of Indian trade for the empire and suggesting that revolutionary measures should be adopted to enlarge this trade. Discussing the prospects of "imperial development" the Liberal Industrial Inquiry Committee writes:

"It must be enormously to our advantage to encourage the growth of Indian prosperity and Indian trade, India's chief need is an increase of the purchasing power of her vast but poverty-stricken population... Anything which adds to the gross income of India adds to the trade of the world, and particularly of this country. At present India is endeavouring to achieve this end by stimulating manufactures behind a protective tariff... For the increase of Indian prosperity a great expansion of capital investment for the equipment of the country with scientific means of production is required..."<sup>5</sup>

5. The British Liberal Party disapproves of the introduction of protectionism in India. The economic doctrines of whigism were the guiding principles of British imperialism in the days of expansion. The practical disappearance of the Liberal Party from the political field proves that its economic doctrines no longer suit the interests of the imperialist bourgeoisie.

Britain's export trade today is full 20 per cent below the pre-war level causing a chronic depression of industry at home. This in its turn, causes a decline in the rate of accumulation hindering the flow of capital abroad which could be the means of expanding the foreign market. There will be absolutely no way of this vicious circle, of British imperialism fails to exploit the colonial market at an increasing rate. Its monopoly even on the colonial market has of late been seriously threatened by new industrial countries with greater competing power. The following table illustrates how Britain is losing ground to others in the Indian market.

*Proportion of India's Imports*

From	1913	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926
Britain	63 p.c.	51	61	57	60	58	53	51	50

India's exports to Britain proportionally declined from 31 per cent in 1913 to 21 per cent in 1925. So, British monopoly on the Indian market as well as on her source of raw materials is seriously attacked. It can no longer be maintained in its old forms. Promotion of production in India under the hegemony of imperialist finance capital is the new form the monopoly should assume under the new conditions of capitalists decay in the metropolis. Thus, the measures introduced by imperialism to maintain its monopoly will have a "decolonising" effect in so far as they will shift India from the state of economic stagnation to that of industrial development.

Discussing the report of Indian Agricultural commission which recommends measures for the rationalisation of agriculture with the object of increasing its productivity. *The Economist* (11 August 1928) declares bluntly that "British rule is nearing the end of its utility". What is meant by this statement? It would be naive to believe that the most authoritative, well-informed and sensible organ of British capitalism suggests a auto-liquidation of imperialism. What it suggests is that the old type of colo-

nial rule has outlived its usefulness; it should now be replaced by a new form compatible with the changed condition.

A close examination of India's foreign trade throws more light on the situation. As observed above, the surplus of India's export is the medium through which colonial tributes is transferred to Britain. The state of this export—its source, intrinsic value and distribution—is, therefore, of great significance.

*International balance sheet of India*

	(In millions of rupees)				
	1913	1923	1924	1925	1926
Exports	2.490	3.490	3.892	3.853	3.095
Imports	1.910	2.410	2.432	2.242	2.302
Surplus of Export	580	1.080	1.460	1.611	793
Deduct value of gold and silver imported	370	400	943	519	393
Net surplus available for liquidating obligations abroad	210	680	517	1.092	400

Now, on the basis of various estimates the interests, profits, dividends, commissions, etc., on the total British capital invested in India can be approximately calculated to be between 800 and 1,000 millions of rupees. (These estimates apply only to the post-war years.) The above table shows that the net surplus of India's exports, in the post-war years, has never covered this enormous tribute, except in 1925. But this solitary exception is more than counterbalanced by the fact that the year 1920 and 1921 there was no surplus, the scale having inclined heavily on the other side. So, in the situation as it is, a considerable portion of the imperialist tribute remains uncollected. The effective collection—its application for the accumulation of capital in the possession of the British bourgeoisie—can take place either by its re-investment in India or

by increasing the surplus of India's export. If neither of these can be done, then, India must be declared an insolvent debtor. That is, in that case it would be evident that the recovery from the crisis of 1920-21 has been but superficial. The decline of Indian issues in London since 1923 proves that the uncollected tribute is not reinvested in India. Before the war, even after it up to 1923 reinvestment in India was the prevailing method of collecting that portion of Indian revenue which was not covered by surplus export. In those days, the Indian issues in London roughly corresponded with the uncollected tributes from India. In view of the fact that in the last years the collection through surplus export has not increased materially, except in the year 1925, it can be assumed that the decline of new Indian issue in London indicates that heavy inroads have been made upon the income from India to maintain the equilibrium of Britain's international balance sheet. This mysterious disappearance of a considerable portion of Indian revenue explains how the British board of trade showed an appreciable increase of the income from external sources in the last year after it had gone down beyond the zero level in 1926.<sup>6</sup> British credit in India must have been written off to other imperialist countries in order to maintain Britain's position in the realm of international finance. This is a very serious situation. Industrial decay in Britain reduces her surplus of exportable commodities. In addition to this, she is obliged to encroach heavily upon her Indian reserves to maintain her international positions.

The above table illustrating India's international balance sheet reveals other features which render the situation still more alarming. For instance, by a forced reduction of imports an export surplus was created to tide over the crisis of 1920-21. Until the last year the imports did not reach anywhere near the 1921-22 level. This shows a

6. This figure is assumed in the absence of exact information at hand.

lasting contradiction of the Indian market.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, the inflated surplus dropped heavily again in 1926; for a restricted import could not but adversely affect the export trade. The world cannot buy from India except in exchange of commodities.

Another feature of India's foreign trade is that while the major part of her imports come from Britain, her exports are largely taken by other countries. In 1926 about 51 per cent of her imports were supplied by Britain who, however, took only 21 per cent of her exports. Previously this disparity operated in favour of Britain. India's credit in other countries then represented so much British capital exported there to. Now it is otherwise. Britain's surplus of exportable capital being insufficient, the countries buying from India pay her directly in commodities in ever increasing amount.<sup>8</sup> This means a progressive loss of the Indian market for Britain. That is, of late, an increasing volume of super-profit from India has been absorbed outside Britain. What is still worse for British imperialism is that portion of India's surplus export to other countries, not covered by imports therefrom, now represent so much Indian capital exported outside the empire. Lately, growing Indian investments in America securities have occasioned much disquietude. Commenting on the subject the *Economist* (6 October 1928) observes that "at present wealthier Indians have extensive interests in foreign securities". The cause of this diversion of Indian capital outside the empire, in the opinion of the journal, is the unattractiveness of the channels of investment in India. Therefore, the necessity of harnessing India's capital resources to counteract the declining accumulation in Britain—to check its flow outside the empire—forces upon British imperialism the previously undesirable and un-

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7. Cotton fabrics constitute a third of India's total imports. The amount of that commodity imported now is over 40 per cent less than before the war and, the total quantity of it consumed 10 per cent less.

8. The proportion of India's total import coming from other countries has risen to 49 per cent as compared to 37 per cent before the war.

suitable policy of industrialising India. Otherwise the accumulated wealth of India will flow out of the empire, and a channel for this flow grows wider as the greater portion of India's exports must go to Britain's rivals. Imperialist monopoly is seriously shaken. The alternatives of the situation are to raise India to the level of a higher type of colony with productive forces less restricted than previously; or to allow her to deviate into the orbit of rival imperialist power. The British bourgeoisie would be stupid indeed, should they make any mistake in choosing between these alternatives. They have not made the mistake. They have made the choice. They have adopted a policy, which in the long run is bound to have a suicidal repercussion upon themselves, under the pressure of condition maturing in the period of capitalist decay.

But the crisis of British imperialism is so deep and complicated that there is no straight way out of it. There are many obstacles in the way of empire development through which the British bourgeoisie seek an exit out of the crisis. It is fraught with potential danger. Particularly is it so in India. Industrialisation of India requires capital. Were Britain in a position to supply the required capital it would be an easy sailing? But in that case, it would not be necessary for British imperialism to launch upon the dangerous new policy in India. The problem is clearly put by the Liberal Industrial Inquiry Committee in the following passage:

"The problem of imperial development, has however; been rendered far more acute by the very economic difficulties which make it at this movement doubly urgent and important."

The inability of Britain to export sufficient capital renders the industrialisation of India comparatively slow process. At the same time the policy of industrialisation should be realised quickly enough so that it is not too late before its effects improves Britain's position as a first class imperialist power. The problem can be solved by mobilising India's capital resources under the hegemony of imperialist finance. The defeat of the Indian



government on the question of the Reserve Bank indicated that the Indian bourgeoisie could not be drawn into the bargain on the terms of imperialism. But imperialism was not discouraged. It did not throw off the sponge. The policy of industrialising India was not scrapped. Only the tempo has been somewhat slowed down while the conditions for a rapid industrial development are being created. One of these conditions is a fair growth of the production of iron and steel inside the country.<sup>9</sup> There are facts proving that this condition is being rapidly realised. The second condition is the rationalisation of agriculture with the object, firstly, of raising the purchasing power of the upper strata of the peasantry and, secondly, of driving the poor peasants from their land. The process of pauperisation has reached the limit. India is bankrupt. To hang on blindly to the old policy would be to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs. It would be grave mistake on our part to have such a low estimate of imperialist intelligence. By enthusiastically welcoming the recommendations of the Indian Agricultural commission imperialism shows its determination to act for the fulfilment of the second condition.

So neither facts, nor the perspective of the situation testifies that the policy of industrialising India has been essentially altered. As long as the conditions that forced new policy upon imperialism, are in operation, there

9. In 1921 the United Steel Corporation of Asia was formed under the control of the British iron and steel manufacturers, Cannel, Laird and Co. The corporation acquired extensive iron deposits in India, projected railways to open them up, and planned to produce pig-iron and steel in huge amounts in India. In official language, the scheme is "held in abeyance".

"Great capital projects already undertaken or in contemplation in India promise a rehabilitation of British trade. Rising standard of living in India is likely to accommodate English-made luxuries. The growing demand for machinery, industrial plants and materials for mechanical transport caused by the new policy of industrialisation provides cause for hope.

(Federick Sykes in a speech recently made at Sheffield after his appointment as the next governor of the province of Bombay).

cannot be any change of the policy. And those determining conditions have not changed. They operated more disastrously today than several years ago. They are created by the decay of the roots of British capitalism. Imperialism being the ramification of capitalism is bound to be affected by this decay at the latter's root.

Previously Indian government as a rule borrowed large sums in London. Since 1923 practically no India government loan has been floated in the London market. On the other hand the amount of capital raised inside the country has increased considerably. While between the years 1919 and 1924 the total value of government of India securities held in Britain rose from 225.5 million pounds to 326.7 million pounds, the value of those held in India increased from 132.7 to 341 million pounds. When, in addition to this, we take into consideration the fact that since 1923 the government of India has not borrowed in London, it becomes evident that the amount of capital raised in India is very much larger at present. This shows that the mobilisation of India's capital resources, so essential for the full realisation of the policy of industrialisation, is going on. Then the absence of new Indian issues in London does not necessarily mean that no British capital is being invested in India. When any British company plans to undertake the building of an industrial plan or any other business enterprise in India, it does not always appear in the city for the required capital. Such companies are usually already connected with industry or trade in India, and as such are owners of parts of the uncollected proceeds of British capital previously invested there. The operation, therefore, represents investment of British capital in India though not shown through a new issue in London. And such investments are purely for productive purpose; for British capital invested in India as loan bearing a fixed rate of interests is always raised through an issue in London. The form of investment not necessarily through an issue to London is particularly suitable to the needs of the present situation. British capital invested in India through companies incorporated

there with rupee capital, easily multiplies itself by attracting Indian capital. This is another method of mobilising India's capital resources under the control of imperialist finance.

Although the determining factor is the dynamics of the situation, and it has been proved that the dynamics of the situation tend unmistakably and unwaveringly towards industrialisation, the case might be still further strengthened by giving some facts about the actual growth of the leading industries. Figures about the growth of the production of iron and steel, the basis of modern industry, have already been given. Interpreted in relative terms those figures indicate that the production of pig-iron increased by 163 per cent between 1922 (when the protection was introduced) and 1926 in contrast with the growth of 67 per cent during the years 1913 to 1922—the period of excessive war-production; and steel production in the latter period grew by 200 per cent as compared to 170 per cent in the preceeding period. In the end of 1926 the British board of trade journal foresaw continued increase in the production of steel in India and observed that the consumption of the steel produced would require erection of new industrial plant. So, the beginning of the production of the means of production in India is in view. In 1927, the rate of protection to the iron and steel industry was again increased, obviously to accelerate the process of its growth. In addition to the considerably increased production in the country, structural steel imported in 1926 was 64 per cent more than in 1913. The value of the modern means of production (machinery, mill-works, railway-plants, electric-prime-movers, etc.), as distinct from the means of transportation, as railway materials, in 1924 was four times as much as in 1913; after a slight downward curb in the following year, it regained the level in 1926 and exceeded it in the last year.

Further, the iron-ore extracted in 1926 was three times as much as in 1919, and most of them were subjected to manufacturing process inside the country. Indian mills now produce finished cloth more than double of what

they did in 1913. India's export of finished textile materials increased simultaneously with the decrease in half-manufactured goods, namely yarns. This shows that the cotton industry has grown not only in expansion, but, what is much more important, in its internal composition. It is no longer an auxiliary to the industrial system in the imperialist metropolis supplying semi-finished raw materials. It has become an independent productive factor, self-sufficient and competitive. Manufacture of tin-plates is not a basic industry. But its growth in India graphically illustrates the trend of new economic policy of imperialism. The production of this industry has increased more than four times since 1923 when it received the shelter of the tariff wall. A further increase of not quite a 100 per cent, and the level of present consumption in the country will be reached. Now, the manufacture of tin-plate requires very highly skilled labour, which is not available in India. Nevertheless, by the adoption of the American method of mass production, as against the old British system of production with skilled labour, the industry in India has developed with amazing rapidity. The disparity in the wage-cost in Britain and India is so great that the Indian industry is expected to enter the world market with a very high competitive power even without protection after three years. The protection to this industry in India was granted in the teeth of strenuous opposition from the Welsh Tin-Plate Manufacturers' Association which controls the industry throughout Great Britain. But the influence of the British Petroleum Trust was decisive. The tin-plate industry in India now serves as the connecting link between the British Petroleum Trust and the Indian iron and steel producers, Tata and Co.

Indeed, compared with the vast expanse and population of India, the absolute significance of these figures is not very great. India still remains overwhelmingly an agricultural country. The historic significance of these figures is that they indicate the tendency. They show that the policy of imperialism is no longer to obstruct the in-

dustrial development of India. On the contrary, subject to the innumerable difficulties involved in it, the policy of imperialism at present is to foment industrial development of India. The very inner crisis of imperialism, which has obliged it to alter its methods of exploiting India, renders the process of this alternation goes on in an uneven tempo and zigzag line.

The facts, on the contrary, clearly and conclusively prove that the theory of "agrarisation" is utterly wrong. In his economic survey of the first quarter of the current year comrade Varga also came to similar conclusions. He wrote:

"We can affirm that statistical data establish the existence of tendencies towards industrialisation which run contrary to the general tendency of capitalism to turn the colonies into areas of raw material production." *Inprecor*, English Ed, Vol 8, No 45.)

Referring particularly to India he rejects the theory of agrarisation, and says:

"There can be no doubt that India is a more highly industrialised country now than it was fifty years ago." (Ibid.)

Today India is more industrialised not only than she was fifty years ago, but than she was in 1922 which year marks the turning point in the imperialist policy of exploiting her—the year in which the former policy of free trade was discarded and protection was granted to Indian industries. And as this epoch-making event occurred since the Second World Congress of the Communist International, my views of the situation today is not a revision of the passage quoted by comrade Kuusinen from the theses of the Second Congress Estimation of the economic and political situation of the world or of a particular country cannot be absolute. It must be constantly readjusted to changing conditions.

The theory that colonies can serve the interests of imperialism only and exclusively as source of raw-material

is the corroboration of Kautsky's definition of imperialism as the annexation of agricultural territories by advanced capitalist countries, a definition severely criticised by Lenin. So long as mercantilist and industrial capital remains the dominating factor in the metropolis, economic backwardness of the colonies corresponds to the interest of imperialism. But the situation ceases to be so, as a rule, with the rise of finance capital. And as modern imperialism coincides with the rise of finance capital, it is not possible to assert that colonies must necessarily always remain in an industrially backward state as source of raw material production. The growth of the parasitic character of finance capital and the decay of production in the metropolis render industrial development of the colonies not only possible, but necessary for the existence of imperialism. If production of raw materials were the basic role of a colony, then India can no longer be of much value for the British empire. Indeed, judged from that standard, she could never have been of much value. For, Britain's share in the exports from India has never been very large. Over 60 per cent of India's exports always went to other countries. Now Britain's share is reduced to 21 per cent. Previously Indian exports to foreign countries represented export of British capital thereto. Britain's inability to export capital no longer permits her to be benefited by the raw products of India. Then industrial decay reduces the volume of raw material imported into Britain. So, if colonies were useful only or primarily as source of raw materials, Britain is no longer in a position to exploit colonies. Therefore, it is not possible to lay down a hard and fast rule determining the relation between the colonies and imperialist metropolis in all periods and under all conditions. The relation has only one fundamental principle, and that is the exploitation of the colonies by the imperialist country. When it is profitable for imperialism to hold the colonies as source of raw material for the industrial metropolism the policy is to obstruct the development of modern means of production there; then the conditions change, and owing to

industrial decay in the metropolis the raw product of the colonies cannot be disposed of profitably in the old method, their manufacture in the colonies into commodities becomes the more suitable means of exploiting the latter. As manufactured commodities contain more surplus value produced by the colonial toiling masses than in raw products, the super-profit for imperialism becomes greater, when the new method of exploitation is applied. So, under certain condition, industrialisation of the colonies is in the very nature of imperialism.

Only in the light of this new policy of imperialism can we make a correct estimation of the political situation in India. If there were no change in the policy of imperialism, if it were true as comrade Bukharin asserted in his political report etc. the Sixth Congress, that, on the contrary,<sup>10</sup> "British imperialism has increased its colonial oppression of India in general and of the *Indian bourgeoisie in particular*" (italics are mine—MNR), then his observation made in the same report that "it is inconceivable that the (Indian) bourgeoisie will play a revolutionary role for any length of time", cannot be wholly correct. In that case it would also not be automatically clear that "the politics of the Indian bourgeoisie are not revolutionary politics" as comrade Kuusinen asserted in his report on the colonial question. The Indian bourgeoisie cannot be assumed to be fond of being oppressed or constitutionally averse to revolutionary politics. They cannot be expected to take up a revolutionary fight against imperialism, have already practically given up all real opposition to imperialism, because the new economic policy of imperialism permits the economic development of their class. On the background of a compromise as regards the essentials of the situation, certain section of the bourgeoisie is simply manoeuvring to secure the most favourable position possible. The counter-manoeuvres of imperialism, also to occupy the most favourable position, cannot

10. The quotation from comrade Bukharin is taken from the *Inprecor*, English Ed.

be called new "oppression", particularly of the Indian bourgeoisie.

The great revolutionary mass movement of 1920-21 could not be suppressed by imperialism. It was betrayed and liquidated by the bourgeoisie as soon as imperialism indicated its willingness to make some economic concession. In the beginning of the year the boycott of the Simon commission also was not suppressed by imperialism. It was sabotaged by the bourgeoisie who, as a matter of fact, never wanted it. Step by step, the bourgeoisie have abandoned the boycott, and at this moment the leaders of boycottist parties are carrying on negotiation with the Simon commission behind the scene. Why do the nationalist bourgeoisie act in this way? Because the new economic policy of imperialism makes considerable concession to Indian capitalism. As soon as a way out of the political impasse is found, the bourgeoisie will settle down to work on the basis of these concessions. By conclusively formulating their demand as "dominion status within the British empire", cynically violating the resolution of the National Congress, they have set their face against further political commotion except of the harmless parliamentary brand. They have accepted junior partnership with imperialism, on principle; only the details of the bargain now remain to be settled.

The "de-colonising" effect of the new policy touches only the bourgeoisie. The masses of India will remain in the state of colonial slavery even after the process of "de-colonisation" culminates in the grant of dominion status. But parallel to the economic concessions made to Indian capitalism, there has been a transformation in the political position of the Indian bourgeoisie, and still further transformation is going to take place in the near future. It is still an open question how near to their covered dominion status will the Indian bourgeoisie arrive in consequence of the constitutional tug-of-war at present in play. But there is no doubt that the result will be a further advance towards the goal. Politically and economically, the burden of colonial regime on the bour-



geoisie has been reduced since the war and will be further reduced in the near future. This can be reasonably and historically reckoned as a process of "de-colonisation" as far as it goes, as far as the bourgeoisie are concerned. And this relative liberation of the class interests of the bourgeoisie from the deadening grip of the old form of colonial exploitation, is the cause of their deviation from the revolutionary path towards a compromise with imperialism.

In his report, comrade Kuusinen purposely did not touch the selfgoverning colonies like Canada, Australia, South Africa, etc., because, in his opinion, they are practically independent capitalist countries. If the selfgoverning colonies are not to be reckoned as colonies proper, then it is but logical to infer that in proportion as India approaches the status of a selfgoverning colony, she undergoes a process of "de-colonisation", in limited sense, as far as the bourgeoisie are concerned. Now let us chronical some facts illustrating the success of political rights, even some power, to the Indian bourgeoisie since the war.

Until the war, politically the Indian bourgeoisie together with the rest of the population were in a state of practically complete suppression. The reforms of 1909 did not alter their position essentially. The net result of those reforms was that some higher grade of the public services was made accessible to the upper strata of the bourgeoisie. But the reforms of 1919 were different. They were much less than what had been promised by imperialism to assure the loyalty of the Indian bourgeoisie during the war. Nevertheless, they did confer upon the bourgeoisie considerable political rights and even the elements of power. These reforms were relatively of great importance, in view of the fact that until the war the bourgeoisie, as a class, had been as unfranchised, as the rest of the population.

The reforms of 1919 enfranchised not only the bourgeoisie, but even the upper stratum of the petty bourgeoisie. A very large majority of the central as well as the provincial legislatures was subjected to election. The

provincial executive was made partially responsible to the legislature no less than 70 per cent of which would be elected. The administration of agriculture, industry, local self-government, education and sanitation was given over to Indian ministers under the control of the legislature, in the administrative units lower than the provincial government much greater place was conceded to the Indian bourgeoisie for example, the administration of the premier city of the country, Calcutta, was completely in the hands of the nationalist bourgeoisie from 1923 to the last year. The municipal government of the city of Bombay has also been largely under nationalist control. Even in the central government the native bourgeoisie can wield a considerable amount of pressure upon the executive if they have the courage.

They are at least in a position to impede seriously the smooth operation of the executive machinery if this would not be somewhat amenable to their influence. This was demonstrated during the years 1924 and 1925 when the nationalist members of the legislature acted as a solid opposition block. All these superficial concessions did not alter the fact that the state power ultimately remained with imperialism; but within this limit, the Indian bourgeoisie were given considerable elbow-room. In view of the fact that the programme of the nationalist bourgeoisie has never been complete conquest of power from imperialism (when India is raised to the status of a self-governing dominion imperialism will still remain the paramount power), this limited accession to rights and power was not negligible from their angle of vision. The reforms of 1919 were a step towards self-government, as far as the bourgeoisie were concerned. By the upper strata of their class the reforms were from the beginning recognised as such. The lower strata criticised and for a short time boycotted the reforms, not on their merit, but as not sufficient.

The majority of the members of the commissions (Industrial commission, Fiscal commission, Currency commission, Agricultural commission) whose findings consti-

tuted the basis of the new economic policy of imperialism, were representatives of the Indian bourgeoisie. The chairman of the Fiscal commission, on whose recommendation protectionism became the policy of the government was an Indian industrial magnate. The highest state offices, only excluding the viceroyalty, are today open to the Indians, and not a few of them are actually occupied.

In a number of occasions the Indian bourgeoisie have exercised their political rights to the discomfort of imperialism. So much as that the most short-sighted die-hard elements among the British residents in India have demanded the revocation of the reforms. The following are some of the most noteworthy occasions. The tariff board set up by the government to consider the claims of industries applying for protection is composed of three members, two of them are Indians. After admitting the claims of a series of industries, largely or exclusively owned by Indians, the other day the Tariff board rejected the claim of the Burma Oil Company (subsidiary of the Shell group). It also rejected the claim of the match industry which has been acquired by the Swedish Trust. The government by exercising its reserve power could disregard the verdict of the Tariff board, but it did not, showing its disposition to concede some power to the Indian bourgeoisie in return for their collaboration in stabilising the empire. By defeating the Reserve Bank bill the bourgeoisie demonstrated its power to obstruct the imperialist scheme of mobilising India's capital resources. The bourgeoisie feel themselves in a position to bargain with imperialism for more favourable conditions. Recently a private member's bill providing for the reservation of the coastal carrying trade to Indian ships, was carried through the legislative assembly in the teeth of government opposition. The government may sabotage the full application of the proposed measure; but it has no power to prevent its enactment. Finally, there is the Public Safety bill which the government wanted to pass by all means in order to close the doors of India to foreign communists. Such an eminently political measures,

needed for the exercise of power, was thrown out by the nationalist majority, and the government reconciled itself to the situation dropping the bill so earnestly prepared.

The Indian bourgeoisie are not going to have their demand for "equal partnership within the empire" (dominion status) satisfied in the immediate future. But they are on the verge of a making another considerable advance in that direction. In spite of the exclusion of the Indians from its composition, and the sham opposition of section of the Indian bourgeoisie, the Simon commission is sure to find that the political rights and power of the Indian bourgeoisie should be increased so that the smooth operation of the new economic policy of imperialism is assured. Since the appointment of the Simon commission, both the sides have gradually modified their respective attitudes, and at present only formalities and "political face" stand in the way to agreement. Although the composition of the Simon commission still remains formally purely British, representatives of the Indian bourgeoisie and landed aristocracy have been drawn into collaboration practically on the same footing with the original commission. Thus the section of the bourgeoisie boycotting the commission has been completely out-manoeuvred. For the sake of the saving political face, this section must keep up a formal opposition; but they are sure to end up as their prototype in Egypt (the Zaghlulist Wafd) did in connection with the Milner commission; they will finally accept the concessions made on the recommendations of the Simon commission after having boycotted it. Very likely they will do so under formal protest.

The disappearance of the representative of die-hard imperialism, Birkenhead, from the political arena indicates which way the wind blows in the imperialist camp. Other signs are also noticeable in the imperialist camp indicating that the political position of the Indian bourgeoisie will be improved in the near future. For example, the Associated Chambers of (British) Commerce of India in its memorandum to the Simon commission recom-

mends that provincial administration should be completely (including even finance and police) given over to the Indians (bourgeoisie). It also suggests transfer of some power in the central government subject to the supremacy of the viceroy. The *Economist* of London, on 11 August, while making the very significant statement—"British rule is nearing the end of its utility"—quoted above, observes that "in the provincial sphere British management of Indian affairs may be visualised as on the eve of complete and compulsory liquidation." At the same time the journal anticipates that in the central administration British control may continue still for a short period. The project of Indian constitutional reform as a self-governing dominion inside the British empire worked out by the bourgeois nationalist leaders has been sympathetically commented upon in the imperialist press. A furtive negotiation around that document is even now going on between the Simon commission and the bourgeois nationalist leaders.

So, the immediate perspective of the present situation in India is the grant of further political rights to the bourgeoisie. Only in the light of this perspective, it becomes "inconceivable that the Indian bourgeoisie will play a revolutionary role for any length of time". A gradual advance of the Indian bourgeoisie from the state of absolute colonial oppression to self-government within the British empire is taking place. Therefore, it is not necessary for them to travel the risky path of revolution. In other words, progressive "de-colonisation" of their economic and political status makes the Indian bourgeoisie averse to revolution, and in the near future, when "de-colonisation" of their class has gone further, it will make them positively counter-revolutionary. Transfer of some political power to the colonial bourgeoisie does not weaken imperialism; because the native bourgeoisie wield this power, not to further develop the struggle against imperialism, but to suppress the revolutionary movement. This has been demonstrated by the experience in other colonial countries.

“De-colonisation” of the Indian bourgeoisie, thus, is not an “illusion”. It is a fact which is the key to the situation. By estimating the situation in the light of this fact can we establish what comrade Kuusinen very correctly said in his report: *“The mission of freeing India has been conferred by history on the Indian workers and peasants.”* The worker and peasant masses cannot be mobilised to undertake their historic mission consciously only on the slogan—“the sahib is a robber”. They must know that the native bourgeoisie are the accomplices of the foreign sahib, and therefore, will never carry on a revolutionary fight for national liberation. “The sahib will never de-colonise India” of the workers and peasants; but nor will the Indian bourgeoisie lead the people to national freedom. And this must be courageously told and clearly demonstrated to make the workers and peasants conscious of their historic mission. Comrade Kuusinen or any other comrade will search in vain to detect me ever spreading the illusion among the workers and peasants that “the sahib will de-colonise” them. On the contrary what comrade Kuusinen today says about the historic mission of the Indian workers and peasants. I began propagating years ago when not a few leading comrades entertained illusions about the role of the nationalist bourgeoisie.

Finally, I am completely in agreement with comrade Kuusinen’s opinion about the immediate tasks and organisational problems of the Communist Party of India. This agreement reveals the unreality of the row raised on the theory of “de-colonisation”. A deep divergence in the appreciation of the situation must lead to equally great difference in determining our tasks in the given situation. The conclusions drawn by comrade Kuusinen can be correct when the situation indicates a transformation in the relation between imperialism and the native bourgeoisie; in other words, when there is a process of “de-colonisation” as far as the bourgeoisie are concerned. Should comrade Kuusinen or any other comrade challenge the correctness of the analysis of the situation as given above, he could not logically draw the conclusions as regards our tasks,

as he did. Looking at the matter dispassionately comrade Kuusinen will admit that I have not committed such a crime as he sought to depict in his report.

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## XI. THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

M. N. Roy

During the Christmas week the Indian National Congress will hold its forty-third annual session. The principal task of the congress this year is to settle the controversy between its two wings advocating, respectively, self-government within the British empire and complete independence as the goal of the nationalist movement. The decision of this burning question will have historical significance. It will seriously influence the future development of the nationalist movement.

At present the nationalist movement is split into two distinct fractions, one representing the big bourgeoisie and the other the petty bourgeoisie. The reconciliation of the two fractions can take place only on the terms of the former. For the unity of the movement the big bourgeoisie will never support the demand for complete independence which will objectively commit them to the policy of revolutionary struggle against imperialism. Indeed, they advocate self-government within the British empire admittedly in order to avoid the violent forms of struggle that the demand for complete independence inevitably implies. As the petty bourgeoisie alone are not their dissatisfaction and revolt against the reformism of the big bourgeoisie are bound to fizzle out. They will never take up an actual struggle for the realisation of their demand for complete independence, until and unless they are brought into a fighting alliance with classes, more revolutionary, namely the proletariat and peasantry.

The outstanding feature of the nationalist movement during this year has been the process of class differentiation. Growing rebelliousness of the petty bourgeois left wing, on the one side, has been simultaneous with the concentration, on the other of all the political groups representing the big bourgeoisie. The political groups representing the big bourgeoisie, which left the congress in the revolutionary days of 1920-21, are today reunited with the right wing of the congress in a reformist bourgeois bloc outside the congress. For all practical purposes, this bloc of the big bourgeois political groups has become a rival of the National Congress which is overwhelmingly petty bourgeois in composition and outlook.

The adoption by the congress last year of a resolution declaring complete independence as its goal indicated the revolt of the petty bourgeois left wing against the reformism of the big bourgeoisie. The revolt has since gathered strength, and assumed an organisational form in the so-called Independence League. But in every sharp conflict with the big bourgeoisie the weakness of this revolt is revealed.

Last year the reformist leaders allowed the passage of the independence resolution evidently to placate the left wing opposition which represented widespread sentiment in the country. For, immediately after the National Congress had adopted the resolution, the right wing leaders began to work against the resolution. They met the representatives of the big bourgeoisie outside the congress in what was called the All-parties' conference which set itself the task of drawing up a constitution acceptable by all the political tendencies in the country.

As was to be expected, the All-parties' Conference, in August last, produced a constitution for India as a self-governing dominion inside the British empire. The sub-committee of the conference, which actually drew up the constitution, included four leaders of the National Congress, one of them being a left winger. This cynical disregard for the congress resolution on the part of its leaders sharpened the conflict inside the congress. The left



wing, for the first time in the history of the National Congress, openly criticised the action of the official leaders. But instead of having the entire National Congress as an organisation to stand by its own resolution as against the treacherous act of the bourgeois right wing leaders, it set up the so-called Independence League. The right wing leaders immediately seized upon that blunder, and generously admitted the right of those believing in independence to the expression of their opinion.

Politically also, the left wing leaders took up a very weak and equivocal position. For example, in the meeting of the All-parties' Conference, which adopted the draft constitution, the spokesmen of the left expressed their disagreement with the document, but did not vote against it as, they said, they did not want to obstruct the work of the conference! At the same meeting, the representatives of the big bourgeoisie, however, did not mince words in stating their policy. They said that they were opposed to the demand for complete independence because it could not be realised without disturbing peace and order. Besides, the status of a self-governing dominion is as good as independence. The failure of the left wing leaders to condemn the right wing of treachery for supporting this point of view.

The political weakness and tactical mistake of the left leaders eventually resulted in the endorsement of the Nehru report (the constitution drafted by the All-parties Conference) by the executive of the National Congress. Of course, the Congress executive qualified its endorsement by declaring that this did not affect last year's resolution as regards independence. But this is obviously a make-belief declaration to save the face of the left wing leaders. A convenient formula has been found to compose the controversy. It is that the status of a self-governing dominion and independence are not mutually exclusive. The one can be accepted as an advance towards the other. But in view of the fact that those advocating dominion status are of the opinion that it is as good as independence, the formula composes the controversy by eliminating one side

of it, namely advocacy of independence. The left wing leaders have been out-manoeuvred by the right wing leaders possessing greater political experience and a clearer class orientation.

The debacle of left wing leadership, however, does not alter the realities of the situation, which are a process of class differentiation inside the nationalist ranks, and a resulting radicalisation of the nationalist movement. Revolt of the petty bourgeois nationalist ranks against the compromising reformist policy of the bourgeois leaders is the characteristic feature of the situation. It breaks out on all sides in different forms. Independence League, Republican Party, Republican Army, Volunteer Corps, Workers and Peasants Party and such other organisations of minor importance represent this radicalisation of the nationalist movement taking place in consequence of class differentiation.

If the revolt of the petty bourgeois nationalist masses does not receive the leadership of a more revolutionary class, the right wing leaders will recover their control of the nationalist movement and temporarily obstruct the process of its radicalisation. Several months ago, when the left wing revolt appeared threatening, Motilal Nehru, the right wing leader of the National Congress and the president of the All-parties' Conference, warned his rebellious followers against whom he called "bogus advocates of independence among whom you will find some rank communists". A shrewd bourgeois politician, Nehru knows that he would recover his control over the petty bourgeois left nationalists, if only he could keep them clear of communist influence.

Had not the left leaders allowed themselves to be hopelessly out-manoeuvred, the coming meeting of the congress would have been the scene of the battle for the leadership of the nationalist movement. As the situation is at present, the right wing will retain its hold. Taking advantage of the political weakness and tactical blunders of the left leaders, it has gone over to the offensive. The right wing leader Motilal Nehru, who had previously been elec-

ted president of the coming meeting of the congress, took up the challenge of the left, and offered to resign, should the movement so desire. In view of the fact that he had acted in crass violation of the resolution of last year's congress, and had expressed his determination to stand faithfully by the All-parties' Conference, the left wing should have demanded the acceptance by the congress of Nehru's resignation. Indeed, the left wing should have demanded his resignation before he offered it himself. But, on the contrary, the left leaders were routed before Nehru's offensive. And the right wing leader will preside over the coming meeting of the National Congress with the authority, twice given, of the entire movement.

In this situation there can be but little doubt about the outcome of the congress. Of course, as the debacle of the left leaders does not represent the elimination of the process of radicalisation of the nationalist ranks, it is possible, if not probable, that in the congress the opposition will put up a stronger fight by demanding the rejection of the constitution drafted by the All-parties Conference. Nehru, as the main author and defender of the constitution, will no doubt press for its adoption by the congress. If necessary, some formula of compromise will be found, and, for all practical purposes, the policy of the bourgeois bloc, the majority of whose component organisation stand outside the congress, will be imposed upon the National Congress, in spite of the process of radicalisation in operation inside its ranks. Such an outcome will once again prove the inability of the petty bourgeoisie to play an independent political role, and show that the Indian national revolution can further develop only under the hegemony of the proletariat.

## XII. INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS (43RD SESSION) RESOLUTIONS

### I. ALL PARTIES COMMITTEE REPORT

The congress having considered the constitution recommended by the All Parties Committee Report welcomes it as a great contribution towards the solution of India's political and communal problems and congratulates the committee on the virtual unanimity of its recommendations and whilst adhering to the resolution relating to complete independence passed at the Madras Congress approves of the constitution drawn up by the committee as a great step in political advance specially as it represents the largest measure of agreement attained among the important parties in the country.

Subject to the exigencies of political situation this congress will adopt the constitution if it is accepted in its entirety by the British parliament or before 31 December 1929, but in the event of its non-acceptance by that date or its earlier rejection, the congress will organise a campaign of non-violent, non-cooperation by advising the country to refuse taxation and in such other manner as may be decided upon.

Consistently with the above nothing in this resolution shall interfere with the carrying on, in the name of the congress, of the propaganda for complete independence.

Moved by Mahatma Gandhi (Gujarat)

Seconded by Mr. S. Srinivasa Iyengar (Tamilnad)

Opposed by Swami Kumarananda (Ajmer)

### *Amendments*

This congress having considered the constitution recommended by the All Parties' Committee Report is of the opinion that it is totally unsatisfactory and unacceptable for the following principal reasons:

- (1) That it allows the bourgeoisie to compromise with British Imperialism by establishing a so-called Dominion Status which involves the safeguard of

- vested interest, land-owning, feudal and capitalist, and sacrifice of the interest of the masses.
- (2) That by recognising the titles of the princes, it proposes to perpetuate the tyrannical and undemocratic system of government, entailing unchecked exploitation of the masses, which exists in the native states.
  - (3) That it safeguards and acquiesces in the exploitation of the human and material resources of India by foreign capital.
  - (4) That it guarantees and allows enjoyment of all titles to private and personal property, acquired by questionable means, which perpetuates the exploitation of the masses.
  - (5) That it guarantees payment of all foreign state debts.
  - (6) That it proposes to place the armed forces of the country under the control of a committee, which will at first consist partly of British officers, thus depriving the people of their inherent right of self defence.
  - (7) That it proposes to give executive powers and power of veto to governor-general and governors, nominated by the king, thus depriving the Indian people of their sovereign rights.

This congress therefore declares that its aim is the attainment of complete national independence based on political, economic and social equality, entirely free from British imperialism.

Moved by Mr R. S. Nimbkar (Bombay)

Seconded by K. N. Joglekar (Bombay)

## II. FUTURE PROGRAMME

Meanwhile the congress shall engage in the following activities:

- (1) In the legislatures and outside every attempt will be made to bring about total prohibition of intoxi-

cating drugs and drinks; picketing of liquor and drug shops shall be organised wherever desirable and possible.

- (2) Inside and outside the legislatures methods suited to respective environments shall be immediately adopted to bring about boycott of foreign cloth by advocating and stimulating production and adoption of handspun and handwoven khaddar.
- (3) Specific grievances wherever discovered and where people are ready shall be sought to be redressed by non-violent action as was done recently at Bardoli.
- (4) Members of legislatures returned on the congress ticket shall devote the bulk of their time to the constructive work settled from time to time by the congress committee.
- (5) The congress organisation shall be perfected by enlisting members and enforcing stricter discipline.
- (6) Measures shall be taken to remove the disabilities of women and they will be invited and encouraged to take their due share in national up-building.
- (7) Measures shall be taken to rid the country of social abuses.
- (8) It will be the duty of all congressmen, being hindus, to do all they can to remove untouchability and help the so-called untouchables in every possible way in their attempt to remove their disabilities and better their condition.
- (9) Volunteers shall be enlisted to take up village reconstruction in addition to what is being done through the spinning wheel and khaddar.
- (10) Such other work as may be deemed advisable in order to advance nation buildings in all its departments and in order to enable the congress to secure the cooperation in the national effort of the people engaged in different pursuits.

In order to finance the activities mentioned in the foregoing programme, every congressman with a monthly in-

come of Rs 100/- and over shall contribute five per cent of his monthly income provided that in special cases exemption may be granted at the discretion of the working committee.

Moved by: Mahatma Gandhi (Gujarat)

With a view to prepare the nation for the overthrow of British imperialism and realising that this overthrow can only be achieved by the organised forces of workers and peasants by resort to direct action or general strike and non-payment of taxes on the countrywide scale effecting the complete withdrawal of help and cooperation with the government.

The congress shall undertake the organisation of workers and peasants of the land through an economic programme calculated to improve their immediate everyday life conditions.

And shall in the course of this organisation pay special attention to the cultivation of organised spirit and power of resistance to the forces of exploitation in general and British imperialistic exploitation in particular.

The congress shall further pay particular attention to the organisation of all transport workers and peasants for the said purpose of general strike and non-payment of taxes respectively.

The details of this programme shall be fixed by the working committee on the basis of demands of

- (a) Eight hours day
- (b) Minimum living wage
- (c) Old age, health and unemployment insurance
- (d) Land to the cultivator, etc.

So as to create attachment between the toiling masses and the congress and ensure an effective general strike and non-payment of taxes at the call of the country.

Moved by: K. N. Joglekar (Bombay)

Seconded by Mr R. S. Nimbkar (Bombay)

### XIII. THE ROLE OF THE PROLETARIAT IN THE NATIONAL REVOLUTION

M. N. Roy

The historic significance of the events of the last year, particularly of the last months, is that they bring out the working class as the driving force of the national revolution. Ever since 1919, when the nationalist movement became a mass movement, the workers and peasants played an important role in it. But reformer bourgeois leadership systematically obstructed a full and free play of the revolutionary mass energy; and petty bourgeois noisiness sought to belittle the role of the working class. The tactics of the nationalist leaders were to use the awakened masses as pawns in their game for petty concessions and reforms.

Such a relation of classes is not the peculiarity of the Indian revolution. All the revolutions of modern history were fought and won by the masses. But except in the case of the Russian revolution, the leadership was with other classes who, consequently appropriated all the fruits of the revolution. Naturally, the Indian bourgeoisie believe and hope that such will also be the case in India and it could not be otherwise, had not Indian revolution been taking place in national and international conditions entirely different from those obtaining in the epoch of the bourgeois democratic revolutions in Europe. In the present conditions, of the country as well as of the world, the roles played respectively by different classes in the Indian revolution are bound to be very much different from the roles of the corresponding classes in the bourgeois democratic revolutions of the past, although the social character of the Indian national revolution is bourgeois democratic. The working class is not only the main fighting factor of the Indian revolution; it is the *driving force*. It not only pushes other classes in the revolutionary struggle; but prepares itself to assume the leadership of the democratic national revolution in its decisive stages.

The recent events herald appearance of the proletariat on the political scene in this role of potential leader. The



high degree of class-consciousness and will to fight developed in the great industrial struggles of the last year, qualified the proletariat for the independent political action in Calcutta on December 28. The historic significance of the Calcutta demonstration cannot be exaggerated. It is a landmark in the history of the Indian revolution. It brought out the proletariat not only as the driving force, but also as the potential leader of the revolution. Only after a month, in Colombo and Bombay, the proletariat demonstrated its fitness for the leadership of the revolution, the claim to which was asserted in Calcutta. When the nationalist bourgeoisie were irrationally seeking a strategic retreat into the camp of counter-revolution and petty bourgeois radicalism was cowed by imperialist sabrerattling, the proletariat in Colombo and Bombay challenged the power of the state and proved that, organised on a widescale under revolutionary leadership, mass-action can defy and ultimately overcome the formidable forces of oppression. It should not be forgotten that Colombo was practically ruled by the workers for three days. As the Anglo-Cylonese press complained, "the government abdicated its power to the Labour Union". This is a victory unparalleled in the history of Indian revolution; and it was won by the proletariat. Police forces had to be completely withdrawn on the demand of the Labour Union which took over control of the city. Even military forces could not face the revolutionary masses. It was only with the aid of the reformist leader, Gunasinha, that the government could recover the control of the situation. But the fact that the state had to hide its instruments of power, and operated through the popular leader, is highly significant. The lesson of the events of Colombo is not the popularity of Gunasinha, but the power of the masses. Pitted against this power, the popularity of a non-revolutionary leader will be eventually swept away like broken reed.

Not such an easy victory crowned the proletarian uprising in Bombay, owing to the circumstances of the situation. But class-solidarity, courage and determination demonstrated by the proletariat are veritably classical. It was the first real trial of strength between revolution and

counter-revolution. In this historic encounter the proletariat had to meet alone the united forces of foreign imperialism and native reaction. The Bombay proletariat did not go to the barricade to win the revolution in one blow. It was the prelude to the great drama. In the prelude the proletariat played its part most creditably. It was the blood-baptism of the leader of the revolution. By glorious martyrdom the proletariat have placed themselves at the front rank of the revolutionary army.

An examination of the events of the period intervening between the Calcutta demonstration and the Colombo and Bombay uprisings, makes the historic significance of these evident. The Calcutta demonstration may be compared with the insurrection of the Parisian proletariat in the first days of June 1793, during the Great French revolution. Inside the national convention there was a protracted struggle between the Girondins and Jacobins for power. The later, while representing the radical elements of the rising bourgeoisie, were backed up by the Parisian proletariat. Their leaders (the best and most classical types of bourgeois revolutionaries) could not agree upon the necessity of ruthlessly attacking the Girondins (who represented big capitalist and land-owning interests, and were seeking compromise with the overthrown monarchy) as the only means of saving the revolution. In that critical moment, the Parisian proletariat, victors of July 14 (1789) and August 10 (1792)—once again intervened in the situation to force the wavering radical bourgeoisie further towards the ultimate victory of the revolution. On May 31 (1793) they marched to the endlessly debating convention, besieged it and would not let it disperse until it had purged itself of Girondins reaction and the Jacobins had firmly taken in hand the guidance of the revolutionary state.

The Calcutta Congress presented a somewhat similar picture. The two wings of the congress could be roughly compared respectively with the Girondins and Jacobins, although most of the real Indian Girondins are outside the congress. Nevertheless, through the instrumentality of the right wing leaders of the congress they exercise a decisive influence upon its policy. So the conflict between the wings

of the congress, when it met in Calcutta at the end of 1928, can be compared roughly with the conflict inside the French National Convention in the beginning of 1793. In both cases, it was the struggle for the leadership of the revolution between two sections of the bourgeoisie—one anxious to brake the development of the revolution so that it did not go further than needed for the immediate interests of big landowning, financial, industrial and commercial classes, while the other advocating a more radical social-political transformation affecting a much larger sections of the population. In both cases, the latter in spite of its essentially bourgeois character, represented a political expression of the masses; for the realisation of the programme of bourgeois democratic revolution advocated by it, objectively contribute to the growth of the working class, and thereby to the ultimate establishment of socialism. In both cases, the radical elements were dissatisfied with the conservative outlook of the big bourgeoisie, and desired to snatch from them the leadership of the revolution. But as in France of the latter eighteenth century, so in India of the earlier twentieth century, the radical elements drew their inspiration from the working class, and have the latter's support in order to realise their political aspiration. The Great French revolution proceeded from victory to victory as long as it operated with mass energy. Jacobinism captured the leadership of the revolution with the support of the Parisian proletariat. It went down when its essentially bourgeois nature got better of its proletarian deviation.

The Calcutta demonstration can be compared with the July insurrection of Paris, because it was an offer of the proletariat to support the radical bourgeoisie in their fight for the leadership of the national revolution. Indeed, the radicalisation of the nationalist ranks, which culminated in the abortive conflict in the Calcutta Congress, was the political reflection of rapidly developing workingclass activity of the proletariat evidenced by the great strike of the last year. The weakness of the radical wing of the congress was in its inability to understand its own existence. In this, it differs from Jacobinism. It does not consciously operate with revolutionary forces; it is simply

driven by them, often reluctantly. Therefore it failed to grasp the mighty hand of fellowship extended to it by the proletariat in the critical moment, and consequently was outmanoeuvred by the reformist leaders acting inside the congress as the agents of Indian Girondism.

The failure, rather refusal, of the bourgeoisie to lead the national revolution caused the rise of radicalism; the inability of the latter to capture the leadership when it was there waiting to be captured by a bold hand, opens the way for the proletariat to appear on the scene independently— if the radical bourgeoisie cannot be driven to capture the leadership of the revolution, the proletariat must assume the leadership themselves, otherwise it will be used by its present owners, the bourgeoisie, to liquidate the revolution.

The petty bourgeois radicals do not understand the gravity of the situation; or they do understand it but are afraid to force it. Whatever it might be, there is no mistake on the part of those whose position is threatened by the recent events. Commenting upon the Calcutta Congress the clever bourgeois ideologist Bipin Pal wrote:

“It can no longer be said that the educated classes have no backing from the people... Indeed, it is doubtful whether the lead at all comes from the educated classes, or whether these leaders are no more or less helpless instruments in the hand of the awakened multitudes... The Leviathan has commenced to move. This was demonstrated by the invasion of the congress by twenty thousand labourers... The time cannot be very far when the working class, once aroused to the sense of their power to coerce the government, will refuse to be exploited by the middle class politicians; ‘Red’ leaders will rise from among them who will have no respect for any law or order, either economic, political or moral.”

Himself an ex-radical, indeed, the father of Indian political radicalism, Pal exposes the hollowness of the present left opposition. The latter’s bankruptcy fully warrants the remarks he makes.

He writes:

“Neither the Congress, nor Mosleague, nor Khilafat leaders and much less the leaders of the Hindu Mahasabha will

bring about a revolution. None of them is made of the stuff that creates revolutions. Yet all these people have been working for revolution."

This is a very true characterisation of the situation. People with no sympathy for revolution are "Working for revolution". This proves that already the working class dominates the political life of the country.

Testimony to similar effect comes from other sources. For example, the rapidly growing hatred against the communists and the legislation for their suppression are due to the recognition of the tendencies in the political life of the country. The basic purpose of the Trade Disputes act is to suppress the political activity of the working class. In his speech opening the new year session of the legislative assembly the viceroy made it clear that imperialism recognises its most dangerous enemy in the proletariat. Commenting upon the speech the official organ of imperialism, the *London Times* (29 January) made clear what the viceroy had in his mind. The journal writes:

"There is no real connection between these two unrests, (labour and congress opposition). But their very existence and their co-existence, explains and fully justifies the attention which Lord Irwin gave to the labour problems."

Growing activity of the working class and radicalisation of the petty bourgeoisie are closely connected. The former produces the latter. Imperialism and the native bourgeoisie understand it, and go to the root of the problem in their efforts to meet the situation effectively. But petty bourgeois radicalism flounders like ship with broken rudder, because it has not the courage to develop into real Jacobinism by placing itself at the crest of the rising tide of revolutionary working class energy. The result is the necessity for the proletariat to assume the leadership of the national revolution betrayed by the big bourgeoisie and deserted by the petty bourgeois radicals.

The uprisings of Colombo and Bombay followed the Calcutta demonstration indicating the bold advance of the proletariat in that direction.

The Calcutta Congress, not so much its hollow "ultima-

tum" as the events that led up to it and the background of mass activity on which it met, alarmed imperialism and the native bourgeoisie. Cry against revolution, threat to law and order, and communist menace was heard from every direction. Taking advantage of this atmosphere of panic imperialism tried to and easily succeeded in terrorising petty bourgeois radicalism into a retreat. Referring to the Gandhi resolution, which the radicals had put on as glorious laurels, the *Englishmen* of Calcutta correctly observed: "In India sanction to enforce a national demand can mean only one thing—revolution." The *Statesman* demanded suppression of the congress as a "seditious body". In the face of this attack, petty bourgeois radicalism was totally unnerved, and shamelessly repudiated the accusation that it had ever wanted a revolution. The most representative organ of petty bourgeois radicalism, the *Forward* of Calcutta, wrote a series of articles, day after day, pleading innocence to the changes made by the imperialist organ. It wrote:

"On a careful analysis of the apparently innocent word 'sanction' our contemporary has discovered that it is dangerous verbal dynamite capable of blowing up all law and order to pieces... The news will, of course, come to every congressman as a surprise, for they are not aware that there has been any change in the congress creed, or that the congress has departed from its policy of non-violence." (8 January.)

"Violence has been rightly ruled out by the congress. The country has to devise an efficacious remedy on lines which may not bring it into conflict with the so-called laws of the country. That is the economic boycott. (9 January.)

"When congressmen talked of 'sanction', they could not mean anything more serious than pressure of public opinion, economic boycott or non-payment of taxes. Our contemporary had to admit that none of these suggested methods of enforcing admission from the British government should carry the implication of violence." (10 January.)

So petty bourgeois radicalism successfully pleaded not guilty at the bar of imperialist law, thereby exposing itself as completely unworthy to develop into Jacobinism basing

itself consciously on the militant action of the revolutionary proletariat.

Judged in the light of this contemptible debacle or petty bourgeois radicalism, the uprisings of Colombo and Bombay shine as glorious landmarks in the history of Indian revolution. The show that the proletariat is the only class that can really fight imperialism; that is not afraid; that can really sacrifice, while the others talk hypocritically; and that possess potential powers which, when fully mobilised will be able to meet and overcome the most powerful enemy.

History has bestowed upon the Indian proletariat the role to hold high the standard of national revolution.

Meerut Record,  
P 1676

#### XIV. INDEPENDENCE OF INDIA LEAGUE OF BENGAL (CALCUTTA)

Dear Comrades,

Let me greet very heartily your efforts and determination to form a new party which breaking away from the "old policies and programmes" will fight for "full, all round freedom" of the nation. The appearance of such a party is long overdue although spasmodic efforts for its organisation have been made from various direction during the last years. While enthusiastically offering my comradely services and complete cooperation for the historic task you have undertaken, I must avail myself of your invitation for criticism of the manifesto and programme published by you. Let it be emphasised that the following critical remarks will be made in comradely spirit and only with the object of assisting the growth of a national revolutionary party. My observations will not be confined to the manifesto and programme issued by you. They will touch the whole problem of organisation of the party throughout the country.

You are perfectly correct to begin your manifesto with a critical review of the past. But the criticism should be more searching. If the defects of the movement in the past are not clearly seen, the future will not be entirely free from them. The analysis of the past will make it evident that even in its best days the movement floundered for the absence of a clear programme. Therefore what is needed now is not a new programme; but to present before the country, for the first time clearly formulated programme of national revolution, free from metaphysical ambiguities, untempered by constitutional prejudices and unfettered by reactionary social conceptions.

What is the programme of a movement? A simple statement of its goal is not the programme. Nor is it the formulation of a series of demands. The programme of a movement must be the statement of its object as well as of the reasons for the attainment of that object. Then it should be explained how the mission of realising the object has been bestowed by history on the social elements involved in the movement, and particularly on the political party constituting the conscious vanguard of those social elements. Further, the appropriate means for the realisation of the goal should be defined without ambiguity. Lastly, immediate economic and political demands corresponding to the requirements of the constituents of the movement should be put forward for developing the movement.

The pre-requisite for the formulation of a clear programme for any movement is the understanding of the social composition of the movement. Every political movement is essentially the expression of a deeper social fomentation. Only from this point of view is it possible to comprehend why certain section of the Indian people are out and out loyalists, some will be satisfied with gradual reform under British protection, others will be happy in the heaven of "equal partnership" within the British empire and the remainder must have "full, all round freedom". The reason for these variations of political outlook is not the temperament of the various sections of the population, as is often said and believed. The diverse political outlooks are determined by divergent interests of the respective social ele-



ments. Therefore, in order to have a clear and appropriate programme, the Independence League, that is the party standing for an all-round national revolution, should, in the first place, be clear about its social composition. It must be ascertained which sections of the Indian people can never and in the least be accommodated inside the British empire, and, therefore, must fight for its complete and unconditional overthrow. To start a political party on the basis of age is a false start. If the Independence League will be what it should—what is needed in the present situation of the country, namely a national revolutionary party—its appeal should be directed not to the “youths” (as is usually the case now), but to certain social elements irrespective of age. Age is a shifting thing. A youth is not always a youth. Therefore to build a political party with the youth as the foundation is to build on shifting sand. There must be solid foundation if the structure is to stand.

Looking back into the past we find that this was precisely the defect of the “new spirit” of 1905. It was only an effervescence of youth which did not seek a social foundation to build upon. Therefore it ended but in “adventure, emotion and enthusiasm”, which all were of no avail because “those who were borne down for ages under the weight of economic serfdom and of the social inequalities and inequalities were not thrilled when the clarion-call of political freedom “reached their ears”. Indeed, in those days of “emotion and enthusiasm”, the clarion-call was exclusively for the youth; it totally ignored the existence of “those borne down for ages”. Should the effort of today not again end in glorious but futile “adventure”, the mistake of the past must be frankly admitted. The Independence League must consciously represent not the effervescence of youth, but the interests of the oppressed, exploited and expropriated majority of the nation. Then its programme will not be burdened with meaningless verbiage, utopian demands, impractical proposition and reprehensible ambiguity about the means and methods of struggle.

In your manifesto the non-cooperation movement is correctly estimated; but it is not fully subjected to the searchlight of revolutionary criticism. Lessons must be derived

from the rich but bitter experience of 1920-22 for the benefit of the future of the nationalist movement. The 1921 period of the movement was distinct from the 1905 period in that then the movement found a tremendous access of dynamic strength in consequence of a deep social fermentation, which had not been the case fifteen years ago. The movement collapsed because its programme did not reflect that social fermentation. Instead of developing that fermentation into a veritable revolution, the leaders of the movement discouraged it. Antagonism of class interests created a wide gulf between the rank and file, on the one side, and the leadership, on the other. This gulf could not be bridged with all the reactionary formulas of Gandhism. Finally it swallowed the movement. The new movement should differ from Non-cooperation not "in details" as Jawaharlal Nehru maintained in his speech at the Delhi Provincial Conference, but essentially, in the social homogeneity of its composition, character of its leadership, clarity of its programme, firmness of its demands and courageousness of its action. The "possibilities of non-cooperation are limited", because they are only negative. Owing to the task of sufficient appreciation of the gravity of the task undertaken, the limitedness of a purely negative action is not understood even by those who take the initiative in striking out a new course for the movement. For example, speaking to the Delhi Provincial Conference at Meerut Jawaharlal Nehru declared that "with organised masses tremendous pressure can be brought and any Government will give in". This is a grievous error for a leader of a revolutionary movement to fall into. In support of his theses, the speaker asserted that "in Europe the main methods of developing sanctions and of seizing power are based not on violence, but peaceful organisation of workers, peasants and others". This is the most distorted view of the European situation that one could give. The Social Democratic parties in Europe, which propose to capture power by peaceful means have today become instruments of the capitalist and imperialist state.

**The British Labour Party is the most glaring example. It is an illusion to think that the state equipped with**

formidable means of offence and defence will give in under the pressure of peacefully organised workers, peasants and others. It will stubbornly resist the pressure, as has been the case in a series of countries during the last years, and the pressure will be of no avail, unless it develops into an attack upon the state. We could learn something from the British general strike of 1926. The pressure of the organised workers upon the capitalist state collapsed as soon as it hesitated to be developed into an open attack upon the state. If we begin with the admission that the existing states are too strong to be overthrown, then, why take up the fight? Take it lying down. Then, be prepared to accept gratefully what imperialism will be pleased to grant, and glorify that as "equal partnership" or even "independence". If the Independence League is born with the ideology propounded by one of its founders at Meerut, then comrades, it will not go further than the non-cooperation movement, it will not meet a more dignified end.

You are perfectly correct in stating in your manifesto that the masses will rally under the banner of national independence when national independence promises to introduce change in their present economic and social conditions. But if you propose to form the Independence League as a band of "self-sacrificing adventurous, emotional and enthusiastic" youths taking upon their devoted shoulders the noble mission of arousing the masses from "ignorance and inertia", then, the new party will not have the much-needed social homogeneity of composition, and a gulf will still divide its constituents from the leadership. These two grave defects of the non-cooperation movement should be eliminated, if the new party would lead the national revolution. The youthful intellectuals from the oppressed, exploited and expropriated lower middle class should know that their interests are identical with those of the workers and peasants. They should appeal to them not as benevolent saviours, but as comrades fighting for a common interests—one should not put the cart before the horse. The revolutionisation of the nationalist movement which process is evidenced by the efforts to break away politically, ideologically and organisationally from past traditions of

the movement, has been caused by a growing restiveness of the masses. These are no longer in a state of inertia. As long as they were in that state, the nationalist movement was a movement for reforms and concessions. The present demand for a new course is the voice of the masses. The new party will be the conscious vanguard of the majority of the nation, if it is born as the organised expression of the revolutionary discontent of the masses. As the vanguard leader, the party's task is to develop this discontent, to organise it into concrete actions preparatory to the final revolutionary upheaval. But it must be known that the party comes into existence to meet the needs of the situation—not to create the needs. The party should not pretend to have been born ahead of its generating force. It cannot uplift the masses, it should be the organ of the masses.

With this clear conception of this genesis will the party be able to formulate its programme correctly. As it is, the programme is not what it should be. While detailing what are arbitrarily termed "Economic Democracy" and "Social Democracy" the main question of "Political Democracy" is left entirely undefined. The masses are not told how the perfunctory, ill-defined and utopian demands chronicled under the former two heads are connected with political democracy. The weakness of the programme, which is given an apparently radical complexion by the inclusion of such terms as "Social Democracy", "Nationalisation" etc., was soon exposed in a very ironical manner. In addressing a gathering of students at Allahabad at the beginning of October, Motilal Nehru referred to your manifesto as not materially different from the report of his committee. He tauntingly remarked that he was prepared to accept entirely your programme of "Economic and Social Democracy" if the term "Complete political independence" were replaced by "Dominion Status". This remark should give you food for thought. There must be something amiss with your programme, otherwise it could not be acceptable precisely to him whose policy it purports to oppose. Your demands under the heading of "Economic and Social Democracy" cannot be so radical, their realisation cannot be so beneficial for the masses as you mistakenly believe.

They could not be so, if it were possible to realise them under dominion status. In other words, those demands do not attack the foundation of imperialism. You placed yourselves in such a false position by not dealing with the burning question of national freedom—by leaving it entirely untouched.

Those measures of "Economic and Social Democracy" which can be realised within the framework of imperialist domination may be somewhat camouflaged will not satisfy the vital demands of the oppressed and exploited majority. Don't forget the real thing for the glamour of the deceptive toy of "Social Democracy". Economic and social freedom of the masses will be attained only under socialism, but in the present Indian situation socialism is a far cry. Overthrow of foreign domination is the task, the accomplishment of which will open up the way to socialism those who want to go that far. The working class, whose historic mission it is to establish socialism must at this moment struggle for national freedom as a step towards the final goal.

National independence should be made the central point of the programme of the new party; and this is not done just by writing it in bold letters. The question should be clearly put in contrast and stated. By begging the question one will inevitably land in dominion status by the back door, as Jawaharlal Nehru has done. In his speech at the Delhi conference had been secured.

Those elements of the Indian population, which bear the burnt of imperialist domination, must have completed independence. They are the productive classes. Imperialist booty represents so much taken away from those sections of the Indian people who produce value by their labour. The complaint of other classes against foreign rule is that they do not get what they would have got in the absence of the foreign overlord. The basis of dominion status is some understanding between imperialism and the upper strata of the Indian people as regards the distribution of what is taken away from the producing classes. Imperialism will never make this argument by foregoing a portion of what it derives from India today. It will concede to the Indian

upper classes a share in the booty by increasing it, that is by intensifying the exploitation of the producing classes. This is what dominion status will essentially mean for the majority of the population. Therefore those sections of the population, which by their toil produce value considerable portion of which goes out of the country as imperialist booty, are the uncompromising enemies of imperialist domination. The lower middle class, whose political and economic condition will hardly improve in any regime of make-believe self-government based upon a compromise between imperialism and the upper strata of the Indian population, must also fight for the complete and unconditional termination of imperialist domination. Under the shadow of imperialist domination any formal democratic right granted to the Indian people will be of no material value. If democracy come to its own in India, if the people of India becomes the sovereign power in the country, there cannot be any room for a foreign agency exercising control over her economic and political life even in the most indirect way; therefore dominion status will not introduce democracy in India. In it the upper strata of the population may be raised to "equal partnership" with the British overlord, but the majority of the population—workers, peasants, lower middle class—will remain oppressed. "Indianisation" of the public services, a tempting plum held out to the lower middle class intellectuals in order to secure their trusting adhesion to the bourgeois leaders will satisfy but very few when it will actually be sent around to the hungry multitudes. So, not only the workers and peasants but the lower middle class are pitted against imperialism which they must fight and destroy not for any sentimental reason, but pushed on by the iron law of struggle for existence. They are against dominion status, not because it is beneath the dignity of Indian people to accept a gift from the foreign ruler, but because it will subject them to greater exploitation while not giving them any material political right.

By this appreciation of the relation between India and Britain, and among the various sections of the Indian population should the programme of the Independence League be determined. By putting forward apparently radical but

conceived demands, by using high-sounding terms having no immediate bearing with the crux of the present situation, the League weakens the very reason of its being. The vital question of political power should be placed in the centre of your programme. It must be stated clearly that in order to reconstruct itself politically, economically, culturally in order to catch up the progress that was obstructed by several centuries of foreign rule, the Indian nation must have access to sovereign political power. An independent democratic state is the precondition for any change or improvement of existing economic conditions and social relations. As explained above, this change will not take place under dominion status, except for the worse. Ask the supporters of the Nehru scheme, will "dominionised" India stop paying Britain *two hundred crores of rupees a year* as profit for capital invested by the latter in India? If not, who will continue meeting this huge bill? This fabulous amount is found by depriving the Indian producing masses of a portion of their extremely reduced means of subsistence. Now the Indian workers, peasants and others, who live essentially by their toil, pay approximately six rupees a year for the benefit of the British rule, presently the quota will be increased at least 50 per cent to pay for the "equal partnership" of the Indian upper classes in the British empire. *Repudiation of India's "Indebtedness" to Britain; confiscation of British capital invested in India*, these are the elementary conditions for the real independence of the Indian people. Can these conditions be created either by a compromise on the basis of dominion status or by "peaceful pressure of the organised workers, peasants and others" as suggested by one of the founders of the Independence League—Jawaharlal Nehru? Obviously, not. Capture of the state power by the Indian people is the only way to the creation of these conditions. The imperialist state must be overthrown, and a national democratic state must be established under the control of those, who today foot the backbreaking bill of British imperialism—these, comrades, are the implications of the slogan of "Complete Independence" with which you propose to organise a new party.

Once the party has a clear vision of its goal and knows clearly why this goal must be reached, the means for the realisation of the object—the methods of fight for freedom—should be determined. The object, of course, predetermines the methods of fight. Reform can be realised through constitutional means. It is otherwise with revolution. The object of your party being *National Revolution*, you must employ revolutionary methods of fight, unless you want to betray yourselves. Then, as the party can attain its object only by mobilising the energy of its social constituents, the methods it proposes to employ in the fight should be incorporated in the programme. A revolutionary party is not a conspiracy. It operates with the masses of people. Its methods of fight, plans of action, cannot, therefore, be shrouded in mystery.

There must be a programme of action for the realisation of the object. It is not enough to declare that we want independence as against dominion status. A mere expression of wish or view has no practical political value. Still, the resolution of the Lucknow conference which proclaimed the inauguration of the "Independence for India League", is but an expression of opinion. Your manifesto is as improvement upon that resolution. But even that does not contain a concrete programme of action. According to the Lucknow resolution, the League will be a mere propaganda body. This resolution can only be the result of the belief that there are but a few in India who want national independence; and that these few must carry this gospel of freedom to the "inert and ignorant masses." I have shown above that this is a mistaken belief. The necessity for national independence, and the desire for it are there. The task of the new party is not only to give expression to this desire; but also to set those having the necessity and the desire into action.

For this the party must have a programme of action.

While having no illusion as regards the final culmination of the struggle for the realisation of its object, namely, the overthrow of the imperialist state root and branch, the party can set the masses in political action without com-



mitting futile violence. Everybody including those in favour of dominion status, dispute the selfarrogated right of the British parliament to settle India's political fate, and demand that the constitution of India should be worked out by the Indian people. On recommendation of the Simon commission, British imperialism will grant India constitutional reforms which it will consider suitable to her stomach. A section of the Indian people as represented by the All-parties Conference, has already produced a constitution which they think is good for India. There are other proposals and suggestions of minor importance. But none of them has been submitted to the verdict of the entire Indian people. Your party can and should intervene in the situation effectively by demanding the convocation of a *constituent assembly*, elected by universal suffrage, to settle the political future of the country. Irrespective of the attitude of the imperialists, their Indian allies and the protagonists of dominion status, your party should carry on a vigorous agitation to mobilise the people on the slogan of constituent assembly. At the same time the programme of national revolution and the establishment of the national democratic state should be worked out to be placed before the constituent assembly. Incorporating the demands and representing the interests of the majority of the population these documents will secure the support of the majority. The struggle will have entered higher stage requiring other tactics when the election of the constituent assembly becomes an actual issue. Meanwhile the very demand and the mobilisation of the majority of the people in support of it will represent an actual challenge to the authority of the imperialist state.

After these observations on the subject as a whole my criticism of the various details under the heads "Economic Democracy" and "Social Democracy" in your programme will appear more pertinent. Plans for changes in the existing economic conditions of the country should be stated in the programme of national revolution. If after the overthrow of the foreign rule the country will continue in the *status quo ante*, the national democratic state will not be the organ of national revolution. Then, immediate econo-

mic demands of the oppressed majority should be incorporated in the programme of action of the party. These two things, the end and the means—are confused in your programme. Further, some of the demands are ill-conceived, misleading and do not represent the interest of the masses. For example, the realisation of all the demands under the heading “Economic Democracy” will not eliminate the exploitation of man by man; thus there will be no economic democracy. The items under the heading “Social Democracy” have nothing to do with socialism (and social democracy must mean socialism if you mean anything by it), they are measures of superficial social reform, and some of them are utopian at that. Democracy cannot be put into water-tight compartments labeled “Political”, “Economic” and “Social”. It is an indivisible whole characterised by certain political and economic features.

Now let us examine the measures proposed in your programme as measures of economic democracy. As pointed out above economic democracy can be realised only after the social system of private ownership, which leads to exploitation of one member of the society by the other, is abolished. This is also social democracy. There are not two things as “Economic Democracy” and “Social Democracy”.

They are one and the same thing. One cannot be realised without the other. Now, you demand “Equitable distribution of wealth”. What does it mean? Who is going to decide what is equitable? Obviously you do not mean equal distribution, because your programme provides against that. You do not propose abolition of capitalism. The rights you demand for labour will not in the least restrict the operation of capitalism. On the contrary, you expressly desire to “make strikes and lock-outs unnecessary”. You propose to abolish the expression of class-struggle without abolishing classes. The most indulging critic will condemn these demands as utopian.

“Economic Democracy” proposed in your programme as regards land is much worse. You leave the vital question of landownership alone, suggesting “uniform system of land tenure”. This is very vague, What will be this system?

Your advocacy of "the abolition of landlordism" defeats the object you presumably, have in view. Your proposal is to buy out the landlords. Where is the money to be found? The state can raise the money only by taxation—that is by making the masses pay to the landlords who have sucked their blood for ages. The landlords may be paid in bonds issued by the government. In that case the landlords will continue as a parasitic on the economic life of the nation only in a different form, free from all worries, interests on their bonds guaranteed by the state. Your proposal for the "annulment of agricultural indebtedness", a measure sorely needed by the peasants, is equally unavailing.

I am constrained to say, comrades, that concrete demands and propositions in your programme mock at the apparently radical headings "Economic Democracy" and "Social Democracy". It is precisely for these reasons that men like Motilal Nehru, who would not agree with you on the vital question of national independence, are prepared to support your economic and social demands. Therefore my recommendation is that you should consider the matter more carefully paying more attention to the contents than to the headlines of the programme.

The party you have undertaken to organise is not a socialist party. It need not be a socialist party. Therefore, it should not pretend to be one. The working class, which must eventually establish socialism, will join hands with the lower middle class in the fight for *democratic freedom* guaranteeing them certain political and economic rights, and objectively representing an advance towards socialism. Your party must have a *programme of national revolution*, not of pseudo-socialism. Indian people must be free from foreign domination, because it has, for centuries, obstructed the normal economic and the political progress of the country. National revolution means not only the overthrow of foreign rule, but also the destruction of antiquated economic systems and social institutions which have been galvanised by imperialism as support to itself. Even today imperialism is planning to mobilise the native states into an active instrument against national revolution. Destruc-

tion of feudal landownership—parasitic, not productive, ownership of large landed-estates, is a condition for the establishment of democracy. Therefore next to the overthrow of imperialism, root and branch, liquidation of feudalism as embodied in the native states and landlordism is the fundamental task of national revolution. The party desiring to lead the national revolution should, therefore, not go around this task and be a revolutionary party.

Summarising: the cardinal points in the programme of the party you propose to organise should be: (1) The capture of the state-power by the people; (2) establishment of a democratic state under the effective control of the majority of the people; (3) confiscation of British capital invested in India; (4) repudiation of India's "Indebtedness" to Britain; (5) abolition of the native states and landlordism; (6) nationalisation of public utilities and key industries.

In addition to these basic points the programme should include measures corresponding to the immediate demands of the workers and peasants in order to guarantee that the national state will be really democratic, and to make national independence of practical value to the masses. The following are the main of these measures:

A. For all 1. Universal suffrage; 2. centralised democratic state guaranteeing protection for minorities; 3. complete freedom of press and platform and association; 4. freedom of religion and worship; 5. free and compulsory primary education; 6. right to carry arms; 7. equal political rights for women; 8. abolition of indirect taxation; 9. taxation of large and unearned income.

B. For the workers 1. minimum wage raising the present standard of living; 2. legislation guaranteeing an irreducible standard of the conditions of labour; 3. eight-hour day; 4. insurance against unemployment, sickness, old age, maternity, etc., at the expense of the employer; 5. a month's holiday with full wages in a year; 6. legislation of the economic and political organisation of the workers, and of the right of strike; 7. establishment of workers' committees in the factories to guard workers' interests; 8. workers' control of nationalised industries.

C. For the peasants 1. Abolition of all other charges

except the land tax payable to the state not exceeding 15 per cent of the net income; 2. freedom of taxation for peasants living upon "uneconomic holdings"; 3. liquidation of agricultural indebtedness *without indemnification*. 4. control of usury-rate of interests not to exceed 5 per cent annum; 5. cheap agricultural credit; 6. transfer of the co-operative credit societies to the control of peasants' organisations; 7. state aid for the mechanisation of the cultivation of land.

Finally, comrades, I believe that the critical observations of mine will receive in the comradesly spirit they are made

Yours fraternally,

Undated and unsigned draft resolution by M. N. Roy.  
Meerut Record,  
P 1348(37)

## XV. THE INDIAN LEAGUE FOR INDEPENDENCE

CLEMENS DUTT

The foundation on an all-India scale of the Indian League for national independence adds a new body to the already numerous nationalist organisations and groups existing in India, and a significant factor for the course of the struggle between the proletarian and bourgeois elements for the leadership of the fight for national emancipation. Until its session in Madras, at the end of 1927, the Indian National Congress, which claims to represent the central stream of the nationalist movement, had never pronounced its goal to be the complete national independence of India. The aim of national independence, although repeatedly put forward since the war by a small radical group, was never endorsed by the Congress, ostensibly on the ground that it was too dangerous to express openly or that it was not necessary or practicable, but really owing to the influence of the middle-class nationalists who entertained hopes of establishing harmonious

cooperation with the British bourgeoisie in the capitalist development of India and the exploitation of the Indian masses.

Events since the war and the collapse of the non-cooperation movement led by Gandhi have had a shattering influence on these hopes, and the influence of the middle-class leaders has been correspondingly undermined. British imperialism has been successful in maintaining its monopoly of exploitation, its whole policy has been directed towards strengthening its own stronghold in most direct opposition to the needs and demands of the Indian bourgeoisie. The appointment of the Simon commission, in complete disregard of Indian nationalist opinion, with its obvious aim of introducing reforms into the British administration of India which would enable the British bourgeoisie to consolidate their hold over the country, compelled the Indian bourgeois nationalists to adopt a stronger attitude of opposition. The National Congress was influenced in the same direction by the knowledge that the Indian proletariat was growing in strength and was awakening to independent political activity, that a renewed outburst of revolt on the part of the pauperised peasant masses was becoming more and more likely, and that the impoverished intellectuals and petty bourgeois elements were more and more being faced with the alternative of revolutionary struggle or passive submission to economic ruin. Under this pressure, the Indian National Congress at Madras passed a series of semi-revolutionary resolutions, declaring the goal of the Congress to be complete national independence, declaring against assistance for British imperialism in a future war and for support of the International League against Imperialism. At the same time, the nationalist representatives in the legislature assembly and in the provincial legislative councils refused to take part in helping the work of the Simon commission.

The last year, however, has seen a further development and differentiation in the nationalist movement, both in the direction of a move to the right and of a move to

the left. The upper sections of the Indian bourgeoisie became frightened as a result of the rapid development of the working-class and mass movement. Within the last half-year there has taken place a notable modification in their attitude towards the Simon commission. All the legislative councils have now, after all, appointed committees to sit with and work with the Simon commission. At the same time an All-Parties' Conference representing all sections of the Indian bourgeoisie, including the liberals and independents who stand outside and to the right of the National Congress, has adopted a proposed constitution for India which is based not on independence but on the granting to India by the British parliament of so-called dominion status within the "British Commonwealth of Nations". That this conference was presided over by Dr Ansari, the president of the National Congress in 1928, and its constitution drafted by a committee headed by this year's president, Mr Motilal Nehru, is eloquent testimony of the make-believe character of the independence resolution of the National Congress in the eyes of its own leaders.

The proposed constitution, embodied in the Nehru report, which is supported by these congress leaders on the plea that it represents the greatest common measure of agreement as to India's demands among all the sections of the nationalist movement, is naturally governed by the need of obtaining the agreement of the most right-wing sections. The constitution has been put before the Simon commission and, in effect, represents a form of cooperation with the latter. It is explicitly a capitalist constitution and its capitalist character was especially emphasised by the adoption by the All-Parties' Conference of a special resolution inserting a provision in the document that "all titles in private and personal property enjoyed at the establishment of the Commonwealth are hereby guaranteed". Thereby the supporters of the Nehru report are committed to a drastic pledge given in order to reassure the big landlords that the nationalist movement does not intend to take any steps to deprive them of their

property or to divide up their land, and to reassure the British bourgeoisie that their investments and claims to exploitation shall be regarded as a sacred trust by the Indian bourgeoisie.

Under these circumstances of a flagrant abandonment of the congress declaration on independence, during a period of growing revolutionisation of the masses, the left-wing leaders in the National Congress were compelled to come out more openly in support of the independence slogan. The contrast between the Nehru report and the declared goal of the National Congress led to a raging controversy on the respective merits of "Dominion status" and "complete independence", which became a firstclass debating issue for the nationalist press and for political meetings. Those who disagreed with the moderation of the All-Parties Conference came out with the proposal to establish an Indian Independence League to press for their point of view in the country at large. Yet it is a remarkable and significant feature of the situation that the sponsors of the League, with few exceptions, were themselves participants in the All-Parties Conference. The League, in fact, has its origin in the statement read at the All-Parties Conference by Jawaharlal Nehru, the son of Motilal Nehru and acknowledged leader of the younger radical section in the National Congress, a statement endorsed by the signatures of thirty other congressmen present. They proclaimed that they were supporting the All-Parties' report for the sake of unity without giving up their adherence to the Congress goal of independence in support of which they proposed to form a special organisation.

There was a quick response from all parts of the country. First of all, an organisation was formed in Madras headed by Srinivasa Iyengar, under whose presidency the National Congress had first passed the independence resolution; and who alone among the prominent leaders had refused to take part in the All-Parties Conference on account of its rejection of independence. Later, after a nationalist conference in the Punjab had decided that it



would support both independence and dominion status, and Dr Ansari, the Congress president, had explained that acceptance of the Nehru report did not prevent congressmen from maintaining their own standpoint in favour of independence, Mr Iyengar has also come round to this accommodating view.

The new League, however, first took definite shape in Bengal, where a group of congress members, headed by Subash Chandra Bose, ex-deportee under the Bengal Ordinance and joint secretary of the National Congress, published a manifesto and provisional programme for the League. The programme was adopted with minor alterations in Bombay and elsewhere. This programme itself expressed in the sharpest and clearest form both the positive and the negative aspects of the new movement and provides a key to the contradictory elements within it. The programme is divided into three sections, headed respectively "economic democracy", "political democracy", and "social democracy". Under the second head is the single solitary demand for "complete national independence", with no further items whatever.

The economic programme is the most important section. It is the most far-reaching in character of any programme yet put forward by a bourgeois nationalist organisation. It has a decidedly socialist tinge. It is lavish in its promises on behalf of the masses. All these things are new in the history of the Indian nationalist movement and reflect the changed conditions of the national struggle. The programme calls for removal of economic inequalities, equitable redistribution of wealth and nationalisation of key industries and transport services. It demands the eight-hour day, unemployment benefit and other labour legislation for the industrial workers and the introduction of a uniform system of land tenure with annulment of agricultural indebtedness and even abolition of landlordism for the peasants. At the same time, the League really champions Indian capitalist interests, as is seen in the revealing proposal that "all disputes between labour and capital management shall be submitted before an impartial board

for arbitration with a view to making strikes and lock-outs unnecessary". Mr Jawaharlal Nehru has himself defended the labour demands as a necessary part of "enlightened capitalism".

There is no need here to examine the items of the social programme. The programme as a whole is clearly seen to be modelled on the famous tripartite programme of Dr Sun-Yat-sen with its demands for "nationalism, socialism and democracy". The socialist tinge of the Independence League largely owes its adoption to the active propaganda of Jawaharlal Nehru, who has not only taken every opportunity of stressing that socialism must be one of the aims of the movement, but has also provided the movement with a definite theory of socialist reformism, borrowed from the European social-democratic parties, in relation to the conquest of power. Thus, at the Delhi political conference in October, he declared:

Modern developments of warfare had made organised states terribly powerful. It was impossible to combat the government by violence. In Europe the new methods of seizing power were based not on violence but on peaceful organisation of workers, peasants and others. That was the only way for India also.

No clearer pronouncement could be required of the essentially non-revolutionary character of the new movement. Jawaharlal Nehru, S. C. Bose and the new left wing of bourgeois nationalism stand forward not as the representatives of revolutionary socialism but as the champions of reformist social democracy, lavish and exuberant with radical phrase-making but very vague and hesitant when it comes to the means by which their phrases shall be put into practice. It is typical of this attitude that the concrete revolutionary character of the developing mass movement is overlooked and unprovided for. Take, for instance, the developing agrarian revolution, the revolt of the peasant masses against the impossible burdens of feudal, landlord and imperialist oppression. Not only is there no sign that the Independence League is now or will in the future take steps in action to lead the peasants in the

struggle, but the fundamental problem of the fight of the peasants against the oppressors is dismissed by the chimerical proposal for the "abolition of landlordism by indemnification".

The vacillating, petty-bourgeois character of the Independence League as seen, for instance, in its relation to the All-Parties Conference, has been noted above. It is important to notice also its relation to the existing mass movement. First of all, it should be mentioned that the League, which was constituted as an all-India body for the first time in November 1928, with Mr Srinivasa Iyengar as president and S. C. Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru as joint secretaries, has the support of many prominent congress workers, but has no mass membership at all. Secondly, it arises at a time when a big strike movement is taking place among Indian workers, when the Indian masses are beginning to enter the arena as an independent political factor and are throwing off their reliance on the leadership of the bourgeois nationalists and reformists, one side of this phenomenon being seen in the growing support given to the new class leadership of the Workers and Peasants Party. The Workers and Peasants Party has attempted in action to lead the struggles of the workers and peasants, it has formulated the demands of the masses for economic and political emancipation, it was the first organisation to rally strong popular support for the slogan of complete national independence.

Under these circumstances, it is impossible not to see in the Independence for India League a challenge to the Workers and Peasants Party, an attempt to regain the ascendancy of the nationalist bourgeoisie over the masses, which were in danger of escaping from bourgeois influence. It should be noted also that the leaders of the Independence League have never joined or supported the Workers and Peasants Party, and that such typical leaders as S. C. Bose have played a prominent part in liquidating strikes to the satisfaction of the employers.

Hence, a correct estimate of the new development of the situation in India must recognise not only the intensifica-

tion of the fight against British imperialism but also the growth of the struggle between the Indian proletariat and the Indian bourgeoisie, a struggle in which the Indian proletariat not only comes into conflict with the Indian bourgeoisie in defence of its class interests, but also fights for hegemony in the national revolution as a whole. The immediate revolutionary tasks which must be accomplished by the Indian masses—the achievement of national emancipation, the destruction of feudalist bondage, the establishment of social and political rights for the workers and peasants—are all tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. There are many stages yet before India can enter upon the socialist revolution. Nevertheless, the present tasks can only be carried out by a movement in which the leading role is played by the proletariat. Petty-bourgeois movements, such as that exemplified by the Independence League, start out with a great display of revolutionary fervour but quickly reveal themselves as tied to the interests of the national bourgeoisie, who will always submit to foreign imperialism when threatened by class revolution of the masses, and when the moment of action comes they collapse like the bubble of revolutionary Gandhism. Their part is played if they help to bring the masses into action. When they began to hinder the development of revolutionary mass action, they are already a counter-revolutionary force.

*Labour Monthly,*  
January 1929

## XVI. FIRST ALL INDIA WORKERS AND PEASANTS PARTY CONFERENCE

*Our Enemies:* Our enemies have begun to discredit us in many ways and alienate public sympathy from us by their malicious propaganda in the press and on the platform, so that they may easily arrest and confine us. They dub us as bolsheviks and communists and the like, but

we must not lose heart. Is it not a matter of pride to be called a bolshevik? Because bolshevik is one who replaces the present rotten order of things by a new and just system, in which the wealth is distributed justly, where there are no poor and no rich classes, where there is no unemployment, in which there is an end of the ruler and the ruled, oppressor and the oppressed, employer and the employee, landlord and peasant, where every one is prosperous and gets all he needs, where all live a happy and prosperous life.

To speak my mind freely I am working to bring about such an order of things and because the bolsheviks of Russia have shown us the way in this respect—we are thankful to them. If our enemies call us bolsheviks, we accept the epithet, because we know that bolshevism stands for liberty, equality and fraternity.

*Need of Central Organisation:* So far our parties have been working in their respective provinces and I am glad to see that in almost all cases our point of view has been the same. In our respective provinces we have gained power that is to count with. But in this working provincewise not only is there a danger of differences rising among us but also there is disadvantage of our power being divided. By uniting all parties into one central body we shall acquire a power that will carry weight. This central body has long been overdue, but we have not been able to coordinate our activities so far. Now we should thank those of our Calcutta comrades who with great labour and at great expense have called this All India Workers and Peasants Party conference and have given us an opportunity to understand and cooperate shoulder to shoulder with one another. I am sure that this organisation of ours will prove very beneficial to the country and will shorten the life of our bondage.

I make bold to suggest that in order to place our viewpoint before the country and to educate our members we should start a weekly organ, for this will keep us in touch with the work going on in different provinces. Besides

many persons who misunderstand us will come to know our ideas and aims and have sympathy for us.

*Tasks of the Party:* Now a question arises that our bourgeois leaders are retreating by inches and are prepared to seek compromise with the British government at any cost and are thus leaving the masses in this miserable condition. This proves clearly that the problem of the country's freedom has not been solved. But the condition of the masses has grown so wretched that to remain any longer under British yoke means death to them. They cannot wait long, therefore they urgently need solution of their troubles. What should that solution be?

If we study the history of our parties, we shall learn that in every province their origin was due to the dissatisfaction with bourgeois leadership. Secondly the muslims that had left India because of khilafat question, on their return brought communist ideas with them from Russia. They had seen there what great changes that revolution had brought there in the masses. These were the reasons that they along with others were forced to form a party separate from the Indian National Congress. They cooperated with the Congress as far as their principles allowed this but in cases where the Congress advised for a backward policy they worked independently. Unlike the bourgeois leaders they did not say "Let us get the masses on our side", but they said "Let us be on the side of the masses". Because of this the masses soon began to look to these persons for leadership.

Throughout my address I have been explaining our programme but a few points need special emphasis:

First, that whatever programme may be, it should be based on class struggle. We should work for 100 per cent organisation, we must see that all our members become class conscious and know their goal and how to reach it. Besides, we shall have to educate them with the necessity of unceasing war against the exploiters, for without these tactics it is difficult to win economic freedom. We must again face the bourgeois reformist leaders who have be-

trayed many strikes and agrarian movements. We should encourage hartals and strikes.

Secondly our watchword should be complete independence and we should declare from house tops that we are not prepared to come to terms until and unless we achieve complete independence. Besides this we should carry on an active propaganda to call a constituent assembly where representatives will be sent by universal adult suffrage. This assembly will frame a programme for the masses, because All-Parties Conference has failed to safeguard the interest of all and has proved to be an agent of the capitalists.

Thirdly we should include in our programme the abolition of landlordism and the Indian states. And we should propagate for distributing the wealth justly, because this just demand appeals strongly to the masses and will help us in organising them soon.

Fourthly, we should look sharp to secure International affiliations, with all those parties who are bent upon destroying imperialism.

Fifthly, we should try our level best to disseminate our ideas among the young men, because they are ever ready to give up old rotten ideas and imbibe the fresh and healthy ones. Besides young men are full of energy and enthusiasm and these are the qualities that will stand us in good stead.

Sixthly, we should carry on an active propaganda against the coming war and should preach among the masses not to supply recruits and other assistance to the government if war come about.

Last, but not the least, I remind you once again to look to your organisation and solidarity of rank and file.

Extract from Presidential  
address by Sohan Singh Josh,  
in Calcutta, December 1928

## XVII. POLITICAL RESOLUTION

The political situation in the past year, while conforming generally to the lines described a year ago, has undergone important developments. The following are its main features:

(1) Continuance of the firm policy of imperialism towards the bourgeois nationalist movement, and increasingly reactionary attitude towards the masses.

(2) Consequent retreat of almost all parties of the bourgeoisie, including the Congress, in support of a timid liberal programme of constitutional demands, and communal reconciliation.

(3) Considerable increase in the strength and militancy of the mass movement, workers, peasants and petty bourgeoisie.

(4) An effort on the part of the wing of the bourgeoisie to threaten imperialism with the mass movement and at the same time to regain the control over the petty bourgeoisie and the masses which they are losing.

1. The provocative and apparently stupid policy of British imperialism is indicated by the increasing difficulty of its position in the world. The approach of war, and the continued economic decline of Great Britain, render it imperative for imperialism to keep its political control and economic predominance in India undisturbed. But this is becoming increasingly difficult, as the shortage of an exportable surplus of British capital tends to deprive the British interests of an important weapon used in maintaining their economic leadership. Increasing recourse must therefore be had to the political weapon, and the British political dictatorship has been used to force through the rupee ratio, the all British commission on constitutional reforms, etc. and is expected to enforce the Reserve Bank bill in spite of the strenuous opposition of practically the whole forces of the bourgeoisie.

At the same time the appointment of the Buttler committee and the statements of the leading loyalist princes show that serious steps are being taken by imperialism to



safeguard its position by strengthening its hold on the states and increasing their military efficiency.

But the difficulties of British imperialism also determine that its fundamental economic and political line of policy in India shall be maintained. It is British imperialist policy to industrialise India, in cooperation with Indian capital, though in such a way that British predominance is maintained. The policy of concessions is still pursued, as is shown by the continued grant of tariffs to predominantly Indian firms and industries. Similarly the basic policy of compromise with the Indian bourgeoisie on the political field is to effective British control is absolutely secure. Thus the memorandum to the Simon commission of the European association suggests an increase in the nominated and government seats in the assembly, addition to the powers of the provincial legislatures, but no widening of the franchise, some concessions to the bourgeoisie—none to the masses—but increase in the power of British control, at the centre. Further the respectful attitude of officials and of all responsible sections of the Anglo-Indian and British imperialist press towards the Nehru report, testifies to an anxiety to compromise. The unexpected aggressiveness of imperialism does not therefore imply a fundamental change in its policy towards the Indian bourgeoisie, but only a partial and probably temporary modification. The essential line of policy remains the same.

2. Before the firmness of the government the bourgeoisie have again retreated. Their natural indignation and the pressure the masses after the appointment of the Simon commission drove them towards an uncompromising attitude, in the case of congress leaders to support of the independence resolution and the approval of hartals on the arrival of the commission. But later when the All-Parties Conference was convened, and the bourgeoisie left wing had to choose between the masses and their class, they choose the latter. The attitude of the government impressed many with the fact that nothing was to be gained by declamation or threat. There was left no alternative but a united front of the bourgeoisie, on the basis of practical constitutional possibilities. All the bourgeois parties, under

the same compulsion, dropped their political and communal differences, and put forward a reasonable proposal for compromise with imperialism in the Nehru report.

The Nehru report, as accepted by the All-Parties Conference, makes the following principal demands: (1) Complete responsibility for an Indian parliament elected by universal suffrage, in regard to internal affairs, including finance, customs, taxation, etc. (2) Rights of the individual of a bourgeois democratic type, including a special safeguard of private property rights, but including also some freedom for trade-union organisation, etc.

In return it concedes: (1) Foreign affairs to be conducted on the same basis as those of the dominions. (2) Executive powers nominally vested in the king, acting through nominated governor-general and governors. (3) No discrimination against British financial, commercial and industrial interests. (4) The armed forces to be under the control of a committee consisting partly of ministers and partly of British officers. (5) Existing pay etc. of present civil and other officers to be guaranteed, their resignation voluntary. (6) Indian states remain under their present regime, but in relations with the Indian government.

The masses thus enter into the programme hardly at all. In the states they are left at the mercy of the princes. In British India they are given the vote, personal rights, a certain protection for trade unions, primary education, some vaguely-worded promises in regard to economic improvement, and security of tenure of land, the landlord system being otherwise retained.

The report is entirely a bourgeois-democratic scheme, of a not very advanced type, and in relation to imperialism constitutes almost the minimum which the Indian bourgeoisie could demand. Its acceptance means a decisive retreat on the part of the congress leaders from the position taken by them a year before, and represents a consolidation of the whole bourgeois class, on the basis of reconciliation of minor differences, the complete acceptance of imperialism and a minimum programme of demands, into single reactionary bloc, completely divorced from the masses.

The retreat of the bourgeoisie from its position of would be leader of the masses, is shown also by: (1) Its betrayal of the Bardoli peasants resistance to increase of assessment. (2) Its practical neglect of and even opposition to the numerous mass workers' strikes which have occurred this year. (3) The half hearted and formal opposition expressed to the extremely dangerous and reactionary Trade Disputes bill. (4) The conduct of the Bengal Congress Council party in connection with the Bengal Tenancy Law Amendment bill, in which on practically every issue they supported the zamindars against the cultivators, frequently voting with the government.

3. While the bourgeoisie as a whole have been retreating, the masses, including a large section of the petty bourgeoisie, have been making noteworthy advance. The workers' movement, which has been rising slowly for some time, has reached a level of activity and militancy which has not been attained for six or seven years past. Most disputes have been characterised by (1) extreme obstinacy and prolongation; the resort by the capitalist to all devices of intimidation and deceit to break the workers' strength, which however has in most cases been maintained with remarkable courage and endurance, (2) the active participation of the state forces on the capitalist side, wholesale arrests, prohibition of meetings, forcible entry into workers' houses, beating, etc., (3) a consequent tendency in some cases for the workers to emancipate themselves from the ideology of the old-style bourgeois leaders, and to acquire class consciousness and an attitude of struggle against both the employer and the state. The political consciousness of the leading sections of the workers has substantially increased. And at the same time the base of the movement is broadening; several disputes have occurred in previously unorganised industries.

The basic conditions which bring about this movement viz. trade depression and an employers' offensive, rising prices, and a gradual spread of knowledge of the workers' movement and of revolutionary ideas, continue to operate. In spite therefore of some setbacks and local demoral-

isation, the progress of the movement is likely to go on without serious intermission for some time.

There has also been a less marked, but important, advance in the peasants' movement. Actual campaigns against landlords or government have occurred or are threatened from Bombay, Madras, UP, and Bengal; mostly defensive, but one or two actually taking the offensive; while several workers and peasants conferences have been held in different provinces.

Some sections of the petty bourgeoisie have also manifested increased activity, as is shown by the continued growth and activity of the youth movement, the enthusiastic acceptance almost everywhere in the youth organisations and in Congress meetings etc. of the slogan of independence, and the tendency, given expression though not yet much realised in practice, to take up mass organisation.

In response to the growth of the mass movement, especially of its leading section, the workers, the government, in addition to its practical repression measures, has taken serious steps. It has brought forward a Trade Disputes bill, of which the most important proposals are to penalise heavily all strikes with a political complexion, and to prevent all strikes in railways and other services, thus cutting off from the movement its largest and hitherto most active and best organised section. Further, by means of the Public Safety bill, steps are taken to cut the feeble connection between the international revolutionary labour movement and the Indian workers. In addition increased efforts are being made through the IFTU and the British Trades Union Congress to support and strengthen the reactionary leaders of the unions.

4. The publication of the Nehru report, which by its frankness and moderation revealed the true nature and aims of bourgeois nationalism brought about a crisis within the Congress ranks. The hypocrisy of the bourgeois nationalist propaganda for some time past, especially of its support of complete independence, was very clearly shown. It was feared that the petty bourgeoisie, whose enthusiasm has been greatly roused by the slogan of independence,

would withdraw support in disgust. At the same time the rapid rise of the workers movement impressed many with its power, and with its danger for the bourgeoisie. It was clearly seen to be emancipating itself from the control of the old type of moderate bourgeois labour leader.

Accordingly the Independence for India League was launched and rapidly found support among the bourgeois politicians, although its policy, not yet formulated in detail, must mean nothing short of mass revolution if taken seriously. There was even some talk of revolution and of socialism. The possibility arose of a serious breach in the ranks of the bourgeoisie if such wild talk were allowed to continue, even if only for purpose of demonstration, before the masses and the petty bourgeoisie, whose psychology it fitted so well. A halt was therefore called by the Bengal group, who published independently and in advance of the general body, a suggested programme, clearly with the object of forcing the hand of the All India League, and confining independence propaganda to harmless bourgeois lines.

The programme and manifesto published by the Bengal Independence for India League, while using phrases such as "economic emancipation", "removal of economic inequalities", and "rousing the masses", contains nothing totally unacceptable to the more moderate wing of the bourgeoisie. The section on political democracy contains nothing but the demand for complete independence and that on social democracy familiar items of social reforms propaganda. The economic demands include for workers, the eight hour day for factory workers, unemployment pay, sickness insurance, pensions, etc. and control of the rate of interests on loans and supply of cheap credit by cooperative institutions. In connection with industry it is proposed to nationalise the key industries, railways, shipping and air services, to introduce compulsory arbitration, profit sharing and labour participation in management. Taxation on private capital, including inheritance duties are also proposed.

This is a programme not intended to rouse the revolutionary energy of the masses in pursuit of their economic demands, but is calculated to bring Indian industrialism into

line with modern bourgeois practice, including its methods of keeping the workers under control. It is essentially a programme for the bourgeoisie, in which items are included not as demands by the workers, but as promises of what will be done for them by the bourgeoisie when bourgeois independence is established, so that the independent workers' movement may be held in check. In particular it has no revolutionary significance at all.

Even more reactionary is the programme in connection with the land, in which the chief items are annulment of agricultural indebtedness and abolition of landlordism by indemnification. This item provides a very clear indication that the Independence League intends no break with the Congress, which in Bengal is notoriously influenced by landowning interests, but is on the contrary more in fundamental agreement with the general line of Congress policy.

The unreal and hypocritical character of the programme is perhaps most definitely revealed by the fact that throughout there is not a word mentioned of the method by which the aims are to be achieved.

The programme is quite in line in its counterrevolutionary character with the usual propaganda of its leaders (cf. the presidential speech of Mr S. C. Bose at the Maharashtra Provincial Conference, 1928 in which the class struggle is definitely opposed) and with their conduct in connection with labour disputes. In more than one strike the efforts of the Independence League leaders have been directed towards stopping the strikes in the interests of a national industry. Some leaders of this school do not hesitate to avow themselves fascists.

Although the Bengal League represents a moderate wing in relation to some other sections, the nature of the League as a whole is fundamentally the same. This is shown by:

- (1) The personnel of the leading groups, the members of the All-Parties Conference who signed the initial manifesto, and the decision to make the League a wing of the National Congress only. No section or group which is loyal to Congress principles can really lead the masses. Congress

aims are nationalist and opposed to class struggle. The mass movement can only grow by waging the class struggle. To confine the League membership to congress members means in effect to exclude the masses. (2) The action of most of the members in supporting simultaneously the Independence League and the Nehru report "except for Dominion Status". The whole report depends upon dominion status, that is, compromise with imperialism, as its basis and its provisions are quite incompatible with any attainable independence. (3) The repeated hint that if independence is advocated, dominion status may be granted as a compromise. (4) The failure of almost all the propagandists of the League to treat the matter seriously. They appear to think that a mere sentiment in favour of independence is sufficient qualification for membership of the League and that the propaganda of this sentiment is its whole work. The practical revolutionary implications of independence are neglected almost entirely.

The Independence for India League is thus to be looked upon as the resultant of different tendencies: (1) a hesitating and as yet confused move on the part of a section of the petty bourgeoisie towards a revolutionary policy, with perhaps on the part of some of the idea of exploiting the revolutionary mass movement for the attainment of independence for the middle classes. (2) An attempt by a section of the bourgeoisie to extort concessions from imperialism by threatening it with a movement for independence among the middle classes and the masses. (3) An attempt by a section of the bourgeoisie to regain that control over the mass movement and the petty bourgeoisie with the increasingly reactionary attitude of the bourgeois class as a whole, and of the bourgeois labour leaders, is causing it to lose.

In conditions of rising mass movement, the Workers and Peasants Party has (1) to assist the growth of the movement to the utmost, (2) to clarify its very confused ideas, and (3) to improve its organisation, especially that of the working class vanguard of the movement, and to widen and strengthen the party.

For the first purpose it is necessary to establish united front with all organisations which tend to increase the momentum of the movement, whether of the workers or of the peasants or of the petty bourgeoisie. But for the remaining purposes; it is essential to insist more strongly than has been done previously upon the independent role of the Workers and Peasants Party, as the only organisation which has a correct policy and can unite and lead all the mass revolutionary forces of the country. The party can be content no longer to act primarily as a section or wing of another organisation. It is the only genuine representative of the rising mass movement.

The developments of the past year bring the relations between the Workers and Peasants Party on the one hand, and the National Congress with its independence wing on the other, to a new stage. The gradual divergence between the masses and the bourgeoisie, which had been making itself manifest for some years past, has sharpened decisively. The bourgeoisie as a whole has retreated, and that section which has not done so, maintains its advanced position more and more obviously for tactical reasons only. On the other hand the masses have advanced considerably. The appropriate expression of the old relations between the movements, was that the Workers and Peasants Party constituted itself a left wing of the national movement and worked as a section of the Congress.

This can no longer be the situation. The Workers and Peasants Party is the representative of the advancing mass movement. The dominant leadership of the Congress associates itself with the retreating bourgeois bloc, whose representative organisation is the All-Parties Conference. The two movements separate, and their leading organisation must do so also. The Workers and Peasants Party must henceforth play a definitely independent part.

For some time however the Congress will maintain its composite character, of a loose organisation, with indefinite creed, under bourgeois leadership, but with a petty bourgeois following including different social strata and different political tendencies, some of a potentially revolu-



tionary nature. While this is the case, and while the Workers and Peasants Party remains relatively weak and unorganised in the country, it will be necessary to follow the traditional policy of forming fractions within Congress organisations, for the purpose of agitation of exposing its reactionary leadership and of drawing the revolutionary sections towards the Workers and Peasants Party. This policy however is only temporary. The Workers and Peasants Party can have no intention of dominating or capturing the Congress; the function of its members within the Congress is a purely critical one. Party members cannot therefore be allowed to take office in Congress organisations. The object of the Workers and Peasants Party can only be to build up its own independent organisation, so that it can as soon as possible dispense with the necessity of agitation with the Congress.

The relation with the Independence League is of a different nature. Although not homogeneous in membership, the Independence League has a definite policy and programme. It is in essence a bourgeois organisation whose policy is an insincere travesty of that of the Workers and Peasants Party, and whose object is in large part to prevent the independent growth of the mass movement. Workers and Peasants Party members cannot enter the Independence League as members, as to do so would be to attribute to it before the masses a seriousness and importance which it does not possess. The Workers and Peasants Party can only work with the Independence League in a united front, on the basis of the propaganda for independence, which in spite of its frivolous character has objectively some value. But it is necessary continually to expose the League's faults of programme and policy, and its fundamentally bourgeois, even fascist character, and ultimately counter-revolutionary role.

As opposed to the policy of the Independence League the Workers and Peasants Party must emphasise the following principal points:

1. It must expose the Nehru report as a whole, and especially the pretence that it is possible to support simul-

taneously the report and independence. The allied conception that dominion status is a "step to independence" must also be exploded.

2. There must be left no doubt as to the meaning of independence; it involves the destruction of imperialist political and military control, and economic penetration, and hence necessitates revolution.

3. The independence of the labour movement from bourgeois control must be insisted upon, and the necessity of its pursuing its class struggle against all exploiters.

4. The abolition of landlordism, in principle without compensation, must also be put forward, and the consequent necessity of the agrarian revolution.

5. In regard to the states, the policy of the Nehru report, which is supported by the bourgeoisie and intelligentsia of the states, represented in the states' peoples conference, must be opposed. It is in effect to leave the states under their present feudal regime, only advocating some formal change in the relations between the princes and the government. The policy of the party must be to draw the populations of the states into the struggle side by side with the masses of British India, for the total abolition of the states and the establishment of democratic government on the same basis as is advocated for the rest of the country. Only the creation of a mass movement in the states can neutralise or destroy them as a base for imperialism.

It is essential for the party also to develop its own activity in other ways. It must not depend upon the Congress and the bourgeois movement even to the extent that it has in the past for its campaigns and slogans, and must take its own completely independent initiative in all political matters. It is necessary for the party (1) to wage a far more intense campaign against the Trade Disputes bill, in spite of the indifference of the bourgeois politicians. (2) Similarly a campaign of propaganda must be conducted against the war danger, and particularly against the war preparations against Soviet Russia. (3) The international nature of the revolutionary nationalist and workingclass movement must be emphasised in concrete manner, and examples from current politics brought before the masses,

particularly the workers. Of especial importance is the support of the Chinese workers and peasants against the white terror of the bourgeois nationalists in alliance with imperialism, and exposure of the part played by the Chinese bourgeoisie in the movement. In this matter the whole nationalist press and propaganda is definitely counterrevolutionary, and the class sympathy between the Indian and the Chinese bourgeoisie must be exposed.

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## XVIII. THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

(1) The trade unions, which arise spontaneously from the conditions of modern industrialism, have as their primary function to fight for the immediate needs of the working class, that is to raise their standard of life. In the course of the trade-union struggle the need is felt for the entry of the working class into the political field, and eventually for it to take direct political action with revolutionary aims. The necessity then arises for the political organ of the working class, which takes the leading part in its political struggles. The importance of the trade unions in the political sphere lies in the fact that they are a means of preparing the workers for political action, and in that they are the basic mass organisations of the workers which can rally even the relatively backward sections to take part in the struggle in an organised way.

(2) For the purpose of conducting the economic struggle, the best type of organisation for the trade-union movement is industrial unionism, a plan of organisation in which all the workers of each industry are in one union, covering the whole country. Industrial unionism is opposed on the one hand to division of the workers by craft,

by locality, or by employment etc., and on the other hand to organisation of the workers into multiple unions, which necessarily lack complete unity of interest. Under this system a number of borderline cases occur, which have to be settled on their individual merits. And for certain other groups of workers, owing to special circumstances, such as separation of centres by long distance, or as in the case of casual workers who drift from one occupation to another etc., etc., organisation may have to be conducted on other principles. But generally for the great majority of workers, the system of industrial unionism should be observed.

The basis of the union is the branches. No union has a genuine existence unless its members are all organised in branches, in which they meet regularly and frequently, and discuss and decide the union policy. Branches should be established, preferably according to the place of work, but if necessary according to the place of residence, on the members, and in such a way that all members have easy access to one branch. Branch committees should be established, but primarily for the conduct of routine business. So far as possible all questions of policy, elections of representatives, delegates etc., should be decided by branch meetings.

In addition to branches, there should be set up where possible factory committees, whose function it is to lead the struggle of the workers at the most vital point within the place of work, by voicing complaints and rallying support for their redress, leading a campaign against non-unionism etc. The committees should be representative of all sections etc., of workers, and should have special representation on branch committees.

All unions should have a suitable system of district or provincial committees and meetings, and a central committee really representing the rank and file, but the effort must be to keep the organisation at once democratic and capable of rapid action, by providing an effective method of electing and recalling representatives from the branches.

(3) The trade-union movement as a whole must be strongly bound together, for dealing with the increasingly numerous and important matters in which the interests of the whole movement are effected. For this purpose all unions should affiliate to the Trade Union Congress, which must be made a strong and active body. Its executive council should be of such a size that meeting is possible at frequent intervals, and it should be endowed with powers sufficient to enable it to act as the real centre and controller of the movement. In addition in the provinces the local federations of unions should be built up to include all the trade unionists in their area. And in all industrial towns trades councils should be established. They are even more important organisations than the district or provincial federations, as they are in closer contact with the workers. Consisting of the representatives of all the organised workers in a town or small industrial area, they are in a position to meet frequently and to take a really active part in the struggles of the united working class.

In addition to the organisation of the unions as a whole into a united body, there is a place for special federations or joint committees eg among all transport unions, for the purpose of increasing the effectiveness of direct action.

(4) The economic policy of the unions can only be one of unremitting aggression. A continued fight must be waged in all industries for the improvement of the fundamental condition, wages and hours principally of the workers. This does not mean that other matters, such as enforcement of factory legislation, the compensation act, etc., should be neglected. But it means that the essential plank in the programme on which the workers are organised is the demand for substantial improvements. For each industry a comprehensive programme should be worked out, in which these demands take a prominent place, and the workers asked to unite to enforce the programme. If necessary the workers must be restrained from taking too hasty action, without sufficient resources

and solidarity to carry through the struggle properly but when preparations are sufficient, action must be taken.

The policy of industrial peace, which has proved so ruinous even in prosperous and well-organised countries, must be definitely thrust out of the Indian trade-union movement. It is practising gross deception upon the workers to tell them as many leaders do, that the object of trade unionism is to preserve peaceful relations between employers and employed. The object of trade unionism is to fight employers for improvements.

Many trade-union leaders claim, sometimes as a result of bitter experience, that the policy of strike is unwise, as strikes usually fail. This utterly defeatist view cannot be accepted. Strikes can win if properly organised. And no strike, in spite of any immediately disastrous result it may have, can be looked upon as a loss. Its lessons to those who take part, and to the working class generally, must be utilised to the advantage of the movement.

Already the spirit and understanding of the workers has outstripped the miserable state of their organisation. The workers are now prepared to realise that if small strikes fail, they must have big strikes. The general strike is an extremely powerful weapon which the trade-union movement must not shrink from using.

(5) The strike, including the general strike, can also be used for political purposes, and on suitable occasions, if sufficient preparation is made, must be put into effect. The disastrous failure of the Calcutta tramway workers, political strike on 3 February 1928, must not be allowed to stand in the way. The same principle is true of the political as of the economic strike, that if small strikes fail, big strikes must be organised.

All occasion on which the political general strike is called for is an attack upon the trade-union movement as a whole, such as is made in the Trade Disputes bill. The Trade Disputes bill involves three main proposals: (1) To establish courts of inquiry and conciliation boards on the occasion of disputes. This proposal must be fought not

merely on grounds of detail, but on principle. The bourgeois school of labour leaders have extended a partial welcome to it. This is utterly wrong. The procedure of inquiry and conciliation by supposedly impartial persons can only have the effect of weakening the workers, class-spirit and solidarity. It tends to minimise the importance of organised strength and makes the workers depend upon the justice of their case from bourgeois point of view, and the sympathy of bourgeois conciliator for their poverty. If this, or similar legislation such as is proposed by certain labour leaders, is passed, it will have a most pernicious effect upon the movement. (2) The second proposal, to prevent all strikes in railways, posts, telegraphs, etc., and (3) to prevent sympathetic and political strikes, are sheer repression, and must be fought with all the strength at the disposal of labour.

In reply to this attack, increased efforts must be made to achieve the real unity of the movement, by establishing and strengthening the inter-union organisations, especially the trades councils, and carrying a campaign for unity among the rival unions, and for 100 per cent organisation among the workers. At the same time the slogan of a general strike of protest must be put forward and the opportunity used to make the workers familiar with the political general strike.

(6) The past year has been rich in experience for the trade-union movement. The workers, in many cases in spite of the opposition of leaders, or the absence of any organisation, have spontaneously initiated an aggressive policy. It is necessary in future to assist to the utmost to develop this movement, and to give all possible help to the expression of the deep-rooted desire of the workers for improvements.

The principal obstacles to a forward policy by the trade-union movement at present are the poverty of organisation, the multiplicity of unions, and the dominance of reactionary leaders. To overcome these difficulties several points of policy must be observed: (a) The workers of all industries must be rallied by bold programmes of

demands. (b) The unions must be made live organisations, in which branch meetings are regularly held, and the members really control. (c) In industries where the workers are led by reactionary leaders, propaganda must be carried to the workers directly, who must be encouraged to form a left wing, to press upon the union their demands and policy of action, and democratic methods in the union organisation. (d) In cases where there are reactionary and militant unions side by side, the policy of united front must be adopted. This policy is not one of subordination to reactionary leaders, but is a means of defeating them. Both the union as such and the workers must be approached with the proposal of joint action for the attainment of the suggested programme. As a sequel to the joint action, the proposal of unity must be brought forward. Unity of the unions can only be obtained, against the will of the reactionary leaders, if there is established solidarity in action of the members.

Both for the purpose of the purely economic struggles, and for the large purposes of the trade-union movement also, the establishment of democracy within the union is a most necessary matter. The value of the unions, as a training ground in politics for the workers, is almost entirely lost in the trade-union movement as it exists today. Genuine workers' leaders cannot come forward unless they have a thorough education in the conduct of their union affairs. Improvement is to be obtained not only by alternation of constitutions but by continuous pressure from the left wing for the holding of regular branch and general meetings, the appointment of workers to important official positions, the election of all officials and delegates by workers meetings, the proper reporting of committees and delegates, etc. This establishment of a democratic regime in the unions is a most urgent task.

(7) The Workers and Peasants Party, as the chief organised radical group in the country, has a special responsibility towards the trade-union movement. Its contact with the movement is through its affiliated unions, and through its individual members who are also mem-



bers of unions. Its object is to organise a federation of trade unions, with peasants' and other organisations, primarily for the purpose of a political struggle for the independence of the country but also for the general improvement of the position of the masses. It can therefore act as a leading organ of the workers' struggle, and can ask the workers to cooperate with it in pressing for a radical policy. Further, in the mass struggle for independence the organised workers will take a decisive leading part. It is therefore the duty of the party to devote the maximum possible energy and time to the work of organising the workers. This is to be done by (1) organising the unorganised workers with the programme here given, (2) affiliating unions to party, (3) fighting within the existing unions for a radical policy and improved organisation, and forming left-wing groups within them, (4) setting up a national left-wing organisation of unions and groups, including unions not affiliated to the party.

All party provincial committees and branches must set up a labour sub-committee member as its secretary, which in cooperation with the central labour sub-committee shall supervise the work of the party members within the unions. The membership of the party must be made up to a very much larger extent of workers, and the Young Comrades League must be assisted to recruit and get better contact with workers. The attention of the party generally must be concentrated far more on trade-union activities, and the rule enforced which makes it compulsory on all members other than students to be members of workers or peasants organisation. The central labour sub-committee must meet and in consultation with representatives from all centres lay down concrete plans of work in the trade-union movement.

The trade-union movement must also take a clear line in the international sphere. The move on the part of the right-wing to affiliate Trade Union Congress to the IFTU (Amsterdam) must be fought by all possible means, as also the tendency of individual unions to affiliate to the international trade secretariat of

the IFTU. On the contrary the Trade Union Congress must affiliate with the RILU (Moscow). It is also desirable that the Trade Union Congress is affiliated to the anti-imperialist "Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat" (Shanghai) and not to the "Pan-Asiatic Federation of labour which is being instituted by the most reactionary of the Japanese trade union. The TUC should also to be affiliated to the League against imperialism.

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## XIX. WORKERS AND PEASANTS PARTY PRINCIPLES AND POLICY

The Workers and Peasants Party, with the mass movement of which it is the most conscious section, arises from the condition of exploitation and political subjection in which the great majority of the population finds itself. Its function, in the most general term, is to achieve at least the essential preliminary step, ie, the attainment of political independence, for the abolition of exploitation and political oppression. Its strategy is determined by the fact of the alliance, already in being or in process of formation, among all the chief exploiting interests of the country, and is intended to ally all the different exploited classes in a common struggle against them.

The policy of the party is thus based on a materialist analysis of society, and the fact of class struggle between different economic classes. It is sometimes denied that these ideas apply to India which either individually, or in common with other eastern countries, is held to be exempt from the ordinary processes of human and social evolution. This is the counterpart of a supposedly idealistic view commonly expressed by ruling classes even in western countries, and is merely an attempt to use religion and spirituality in the interests of economic exploi-

tation and class rule. It is manifest that material forces dominate India as they do all other societies, and with very similar results.

It is claimed that the organisation of Indian life is on the basis of caste, not of class. It is true that the obsolete system of caste still dominates Indian society, though to a steadily diminishing extent, in its private and domestic relations. But the fundamental economic and political relations, between employer and employee, landlord and tenant, etc. are practically unaffected by caste or religion and divide Indian society effectively, for economic and political purposes, into a small number of classes, with well-defined mutual actions and reactions.

The policy of the party consequently also assumes a complete acceptance of industrialism, and denies both the possibility and the desirability of abandoning it. Modern machine and other technique is rapidly invading and conquering production in all fields in all countries. It is the dominant economic system, and to destroy it without also destroying the bulk of the human race is impossible. Moreover, while capable of doing great mischief, while used primarily for profit-making, it is capable of equally great good when socially controlled. The Workers and Peasants Party is thus in no way opposed to industrialism, and on the contrary regards the attempts which are made to introduce or bolster up hand industry and individual production in opposition to it, as in general reactionary not only economically but also politically.

The result of a very brief economic analysis is that the chief exploiting interests at work in India are the British bourgeoisie, big capitalists, industrial, financial and commercial, the Indian landlords and connected interests, the princes and the Indian bourgeoisie. These classes numbering in all a very small proportion of the population, singly or jointly control the entire country, government, legal institution, armed forces, communications, industries, finance, education, press, etc. etc. Though at variance among themselves on minor questions, as to the division of power and profits, they are unanimous on the funda-

mental questions of their privileged class position, and have shown their determination to maintain it at any cost. Practically no section is willing to risk serious alteration in the economic and political system, merely in order to press its sectional claims, and each is dependent upon the support of the rest to such an extent that no serious division among the ruling class can now be expected.

This fact, of the essential unity of the bourgeoisie, the term "bourgeoisie" is needed here to include also big landlords, etc. "Petty-bourgeoisie" is used to mean the "lower middle class"—clerks, professional men, small traders, manufacturers and usurers, etc. of India and Britain, with respect to their relation with the masses, is contested, but there can be little doubt about it. The part played by the bourgeoisie in the Chinese revolution affords an instructive comparison. In China considerable section of the bourgeoisie were able to go with the masses to the point of revolutionary direct action against imperialism, but even they split away before the movement had achieved complete victory. The Chinese bourgeoisie were able to go thus far only because of the exceptional conditions in which China found itself in relation to imperialism. Thus (1) a large section of the industrial bourgeoisie were in sharp competition with the foreign firms with whom there was no bond of union such as is provided in India by the participation of capital from both sides in the same companies. This is now almost universal in India there being very few important concerns in which the capital is not mixed. (2) The leading imperialist powers in China pursued a policy of shameless aggression and exploitation, making no concession, economic, political or even social to the Chinese bourgeoisie. (3) The bourgeois nationalists were accustomed to militant and revolutionary methods of struggle by years of open warfare against Chinese feudalism. (4) Their struggle was an easier one than that which confronts India, because of the relatively slight and insecure political hold which imperialism had established over the country, and because of the possibi-

lity of utilising the differences between the imperialist powers. In spite of these conditions however, the Chinese bourgeoisie deserted the movement and compromised with imperialist, on the basis of joint struggle against the masses, taking large sums of money from foreign imperialist sources, and making use of imperialist armies and navies.

In its different conditions it is inevitable that the Indian bourgeoisie should be far less revolutionary than the Chinese. That this is so in fact is shown by the history of the non-cooperation movement, which was betrayed and destroyed by its bourgeois leaders because of the danger of its developing into a mass revolutionary upheaval. It is also shown by the refusal of the bourgeoisie to advance the slogan of independence except recently, by a small minority against the opposition of the great majority, as a blind to deceive the masses.

The bourgeoisie therefore now be looked upon as definitely counter-revolutionary, and incapable of taking any part in a genuine movement for independence. It follows that the suggestion that the policy of the Workers and Peasants Party is intended or is likely to create a split in the nations' ranks, is without foundation. The division of interest exists; the bourgeoisie, including the princes, the big landowners, and a considerable section of the small bourgeois and professional classes are by reason of their economic interest impelled to compromise with imperialism. The masses are at the same time compelled to fight against imperialism and against the bourgeoisie. The Workers and Peasants Party is intended or is likely to create a split; it merely proposes to take intelligent account of the actual situation. It should be emphasised that the Workers and Peasants Party does not deny the existence of considerable differences between the Indian and the British bourgeoisie, nor does it seek to minimise their political importance. But it maintains that, these differences notwithstanding, the Indian bourgeoisie will never take part, but on the contrary will vehemently oppose, any revolutionary movement against imperialist,

without which neither the independence of the country nor the welfare of the masses can be secured.

The masses, including the entire class of wage workers, the great bulk of the peasants and a large part of the petty bourgeoisie are ruthlessly exploited, and are in a condition of acute poverty. A large proportion are without sufficient food; only a minute proportion have any education; housing, health, sanitary provisions for all are extremely defective; only a very few have even any nominal influence on the government of the organisation of society.

The demands which the masses are putting forward in the first place for an improved standard of life, can only be granted by sacrifice on the part of the exploiting classes, and this is resolutely resisted by them. In particular the British bourgeoisie use the power of state to suppress the workers, efforts to raise their standards, and the peasants movement, which threaten the existence of the landlord system. The question of political power is thus brought before the masses, and it becomes increasingly clear as time goes on that there can be expected no substantial improvement in any respect until there is established a political regime responsive to the wishes and needs of the masses, and not under the complete control of the propertied classes. The demand thus arises for a democratic regime. But the effective ruling power in India, the British bourgeoisie, cannot grant this demand. They have even been very unwilling to grant participation in government to the Indian bourgeoisie, and have done so only subject to rigorous safeguards and to limited extent. On political and on economic grounds also it is evident that participation of the masses in the government while the British bourgeoisie remain in the country is impossible. The masses must therefore strive for independence from British rule.

From all points of view the attainment of independence is the first task of any movement which strives to improve the position of the Indian masses. The British bourgeoisie, the ruling section in India, and by far the most powerful

of the various propertied classes are directly responsible by their policy of exploitation of the country, and retardation of its natural progress, for its present economic and also political and social backwardness. The struggle against imperialism for the complete independence of the country is thus the central item for the immediate future in the programme of the masses and of the Workers and Peasants Party.

The struggle, having as it does the object of destroying the imperialist control of India, must be a revolutionary one. Scepticism is very prevalent as to the possibility of revolution in India. The supremacy of a very efficient autocratic government renders the task of revolutionary organisation extremely difficult.

The strength of imperialism is however overestimated. The whole world system of capitalism has for years past been in a condition of recurrent crisis. That this condition is not yet overcome is shown by the continuance of partial economic crises in Europe, and especially Britain, by the preparations, both technical and diplomatic, for war, between European capitalism and the Soviet republics, between Great Britain and the USA and in the pacific region, and by the continued growth of revolutionary movements, especially in Europe and China. British imperialism in particular is passing through a period of especially acute crisis, from which its permanent recovery is extremely improbable.

The movement in India nevertheless has to face a task of great difficulty. It must therefore be based on the broadest masses. Individuals may be suppressed, but the masses cannot be suppressed. A movement based on the intelligentsia only is necessarily a movement of a few individual, since the petty-bourgeoisie have little or no class solidarity. Only the masses can act solidly as classes. The petty bourgeoisie also can exercise little power, such as lies in the hands of the workers. The only tactical method of a revolutionary nature open to the petty bourgeoisie as such, is secret preparations for armed uprising—

a method which in Indian conditions, where secrecy and arms are both almost unobtainable, is quite useless.

The illiteracy and general backwardness of the masses again are held by upper class prejudice to constitute an insuperable obstacle to revolutionary action on their part. But the masses of China and Russia, equal to those of India in illiteracy, ignorance and corruption, have organised on an enormous scale, and carried through almost equally difficult revolutionary tasks, and have further shown remarkable constructive ability in the post-revolutionary period. It is a quite erroneous and defeatist idea to suppose that it is necessary to wait for improvements in the education or social or economic position of the masses before any serious mass movement can arise. Improvement in these direction comes only through the mass movement.

Many bourgeois politicians in attacking the revolutionary nationalist movement, do so on the score of the supposed impossibility of using violence. This is manifestly done merely to cover their real objections, based on other grounds of class interest, to any revolutionary movement. The Workers and Peasants Party does not deny the general utility in Indian conditions of non-violence as a tactic, but maintains that it will not be necessary for the Indian movement to use this tactic at all times and in all conditions. And it is strongly opposed to raising nonviolence to the level of a principle. It was on this pretext that the non-cooperation movement was betrayed.

For the purpose of achieving the national revolution it is necessary to mobilise all forces to cooperation in a task of very great magnitude and difficulty. Contact must be established with movements directed against imperialism in other parts of the world whether colonial or purely working class in character. Within the country also the policy of the party is to unite together all potentially revolutionary social strata for a united struggle.

These sections are (1) The industrial working class, whose attempts merely to achieve improvements, in standards of wages and to regulate hours and other conditions, have been fiercely resisted, and have developed a semi-



revolutionary character. The working class is already the best organised and most militant section and is rapidly acquiring the political consciousness necessary to enable it to exercise the function of leadership in the mass struggle. The working class generally has shown itself to be of all oppressed and exploited classes, that most capable of undertaking patient and determined organised work, and of pursuing a vigorous and decisive policy. Its position also gives its great strategic advantages for action. Its numerical strength in India, though relatively small is greater than that of the Chinese working class, which played and is playing a decisive leading part in the Chinese revolution, and is on a par with that of the Russian working class. It cannot therefore be considered insufficient to allow it to fulfil effectively its leading part in the mass movement.

(2) The peasant cultivators and landless field labourers demand reduction of the tribute which they pay to the landlords, government, etc., and must ultimately come to the point of making the revolutionary demand for sole rights over the land they cultivate, and hence elimination of the landlord class. The peasant movement is an essential reinforcement to the working class. The numerical strength of the peasantry alone renders it of great importance. It is a mistake to underestimate the revolutionary potentialities of the peasant class which is in a state of acute discontent and sometimes of actual revolutionary excitement, over long areas of the country. On many occasions in history eg, in the French and Russian revolutions, the peasantry has proved its ability, when under suitable outside leadership, to conduct an effective revolution against a big landlord class enjoying government support. It is the task of the Workers and Peasants Party to secure that the proper decisive and determined, and at the same time constructive leadership is forthcoming. This can only be that of the working class.

(3) A large section of the petty bourgeoisie is a potentially revolutionary factor. Its position, owing to the economic backwardness of the country, is one of considerable

hardship, through unemployment, etc. and it is being forced to demand relief through political channels. But through social traditions, the dependence of large sections upon rent etc. etc., the petty bourgeoisie has developed a class consciousness which tends to sever it from the masses. It has also acquired considerable political experience in the nationalist movement under the leadership of the bourgeoisie. Thus even the revolutionary section of the intelligensia has almost exclusively a bourgeois-nationalist outlook, and tends strongly to develop towards a sort of fascism. In order that this class can take any part in the mass movement it must be freed from the political and also from the ideological leadership of the bourgeoisie, and must learn the real identity of interest, both economic and political, between itself and the masses.

In any circumstances, however, it cannot take a leading part in the movement. Individuals from the middle classes can take a lead only after abandoning the ideas and special interests of their class, and identifying themselves with the working class. It is only the workers which as a class can lead such a composite movement in the sense that the leading demands and slogans must arise from the needs of the workers, their interests must take precedence where they conflict, of those of other sections, and their mass action must be the greatest driving force. The conception that the petty bourgeoisie, because of their greater education etc. can lead a mass movement against imperialism is without historical justification. The bulk of this class is unorganisable and vacillating, and can only follow at the rear of any movement.

The line of action of the party is to develop to the fullest extent the organisation and consciousness of the masses in a revolutionary direction. With the workers this is to be carried out by increasing by all means the strength and solidarity of the trade-union movement on the basis of a forward economic and political demands and a policy of direct action. The policy of reformism and the dominance of the reactionary trade-union leaders are constantly to be attacked, and replaced by a militant policy and

leadership. All occasions are to be seized to draw the workers into political action, by demonstrations, meetings, strikes, etc.

In a similar way the poor peasants and agricultural labourers are to be organised on the basis of economic and political demands. They must demand reduction of rents and taxes, and of indirect taxation, and abolition of the many abuses to which the village population is subjected by the exploiting classes, with the object ultimately of advancing the demand for land to the cultivators, and must enforce their immediate demands by direct action. The labourers must in addition press for increased wages etc. The middle classes have to be encouraged to join with the masses by the organisation of clerical and similar unions on a trade union basis with similar programme, and by drawing especially the youth into practical contact with the mass movement. A fight must be waged against the evils of unemployment by demanding state support for the unemployed, technical education etc. The petty bourgeoisie can also take part in the workers' campaign against high rents. The leadership exercised over this class by the bourgeoisie has to be destroyed by exposure of the reactionary nature of bourgeois policy in the field of national politics and of the conflict of economic interest between the exploiting bourgeoisie and the exploited intellectual proletariat and lower middle class.

In addition to the special organs, unions etc. of the various sections of the movement the organ of the movement as a whole the Workers and Peasants Party, must be built up. The sectional organisations should be affiliated to it, and its members should work as members and leaders of the different section, giving them thereby a united and correct policy.

The whole movement, united and led by the Workers and Peasants Party demands complete independence from imperialism, and a democratic organisation of the country, including universal suffrage etc. It also demands adequate provision for the economic needs of the popul-

ation of producers, by legislation for industrial protection, minimum wage rate, limitation of hours, etc., universal education, and nationalisation, without compensation, by the cultivators. To enforce these demands, a mass movement, using the weapons of demonstration etc. and direct action, must be organised, leading up to a general strike of workers and a mass campaign of non-payment of rent and taxes by peasants.

Only by following a programme of action such as this can sufficient force be brought to bear to achieve the revolutionary task before the country, and only in this way can the people be aroused and stirred sufficiently to develop the constructive capacity necessary for the building up of a new independent and democratic order.

Thesis submitted to the First All-India Workers and Peasants Party Conference, December 1928.

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## XX. FIRST ALL-INDIA WORKERS AND PEASANTS PARTY CONFERENCE REPORT

The All-India Workers and Peasants Party Conference was held in the Albert Hall, Calcutta, on 21, 22 and 23 December 1928. Delegates present from Workers and Peasants Parties of Bombay, Punjab, United Provinces and Bengal (See Appendix T), and in addition many representatives of trade unions and sympathisers attended. The hall was decorated with banners and slogans: "down with imperialism", "down with capitalism", "down with Simon commission", "down with Nehru report", "down with landlordism", "workers and exploited people of the world unite", "complete national independence", "all power to the masses", "universal suffrage", "seven hours day", "long live the Workers and Peasants Party of India" etc., etc.

The proceedings opened on the first day at 2 pm with

the singing of the "International" (in Bengali version written and composed by Kazi Nazrul Islam) by M. B. Mukherjee, A. B. Banerjee and the author. The secretary of the reception committee, D. K. Goswami, then read the following telegram from the Workers Welfare League of India, London, "Greetings to First Congress. Workers Welfare League hopes unity of workers and peasants masses will be achieved for future struggles. Potter Wilson."

The chairman of the reception committee, P. Dinda, Bar-at-Law, made short introductory speech, copies of which were circulated in English (see Appendix A), in which he gave a brief analysis of the political events of the year and made concrete suggestions for future work and organisation.

The president, Sohan Singh Josh, was introduced formally to the Congress by H. K. Sarkar, and read his speech, which was circulated in English, Punjabi and Urdu (see App. B). At the close he moved two resolutions of protest against the arrest of J. W. Johnstone of America, a fraternal delegate to the conference from the League against Imperialism, and of three members of the party, M. A. Majeed, Ramchandra Kapur and Kedarnath Sehgal of Lahore, which had occurred a few days before the conference. (See App. C&D.)

He then called upon visitors and delegates from other provinces and countries to speak. J. Ryan of the New South Wales Council of trade unions, and the Pan-Pacific trade union secretariat, spoke briefly on his recent experiences of China, and the bearing of the events there upon Indian affairs. He emphasised the inevitability of an extremely sharp conflict between the bourgeoisie and the masses, and the desertion of the struggle by the former in the course of the national revolution, and the necessity of preparing of it in India by securing the independence of the masses from the bourgeois influence, in respect to both organisation and ideology. He also urged upon the conference to work for the strengthening of the Indian trade-union movement and for its connection with the international workingclass movement, and in particular with the Pan-Pacific trade union secretariat.

B. F. Bradley of the Amalgamated Engineering Union and the Communist Party of Great Britain spoke on the urgent necessity of establishing the Workers and Peasants Party of India. He also dealt with the international movement for freedom from imperialism, and assured the conference of the sympathy and the solidarity of the revolutionary workingclass forces of Britain and Europe. Both of these speeches were translated into Hindi by D. P. Godbole.

D. R. Thengdi, the president of the Workers and Peasants Party of Bombay, spoke in Hindi, urging all to work for the ideal socialism.

A. C. Gupta, president of the Workers and Peasants Party of Bengal, proposed a drafts committee to consider and prepare resolutions to go before the conference, which was elected unanimously as follows:

Bombay: S. V. Ghate, K. N. Joglekar, B. F. Bradley, S. S. Mirajkar. The Punjab: Bhag Singh, Sohan Singh, F. D. Mansur. U.P.: L. N. Kadam, P. C. Joshi, Gouri Shankar Sharma, Balvant Singh. Bengal: D. K. Goswami, Muzaffar Ahmad, P. Spratt, H. K. Sarkar.

The proceedings closed at 6.30 pm.

The business of second day began at 1 pm. Kazi Nazrul Islam first sang of his own composition. The political resolution, a draft of which was circulated in English by P. Spratt, and seconded in Urdu by F. D. Mansur. Amendments were moved as follows: (1) by Bhagwati Charan that to the account given in the draft of the concessions made by the Nehru report be added it proposes to pay all foreign state debts. This was accepted without discussion. (2) by K. N. Joglekar, that the clause forbidding the entry of the party member into the Independence for India League be deleted. Three spoke for this: the mover and D. R. Thengdi and S. Kumaranand, against: Muzaffar Ahmad, S. S. Mirajkar, S. V. Ghate, H. K. Sarkar, P. C. Joshi, A. B. Banerji and others. The mover then proposed that it be made subject to NEC decision in individual cases. This was rejected as unnecessary. The resolution was

finally accepted unanimously. (see app. E for final form.)

This short statement on the principles and policy of the party, and English draft of which was circulated, was moved in English by H. K. Sarkar and seconded in Urdu by M. Abdul Razak. A formal amendment was moved by G. C. Basak that a word "outside" be omitted from the draft, was accepted. The statement was adopted unanimously after a few more speeches in support. (See app. F.)

The Resolution on the trade-union movement, an English draft of which was circulated, was moved in English by D. K. Goswami, and seconded in Hindi by L. K. Kadam. B. F. Bradley proposed two additions, one to the section on the International relations of the trade-union movement urging that everything possible be done to cut off connection with and to destroy the influence of the ILO; the other to add short programme of demands of general validity for most classes of the workers, these were accepted. There spoke on resolution also K. N. Joglekar, D. R. Thengdi, R. S. Nimbkar, S. Kumaranand, who dealt with the trade-union work which had been done in Bombay in the course of the year. The resolution was accepted unanimously. (see app. G for final text.)

The session closed at 6.30 pm with a peasants' song by Kazi Nazrul Islam.

The third session began at midday. The secretary of the reception committee read the following telegrams which had just been received from the League against Imperialism. "In name League against Imperialism we send heartiest fraternal greetings your first All-India Conference. Hope your deliberations will result establishing strong organisation India's working masses for struggle against imperialism and attainment national social liberty call upon you protest expulsion Jhonstone American trade unionist send attend your conference as our fraternal delegate. Long live Indian workers and peasants. Long live Independent India. Signed for International Secretariat, Muenzenberg, Chattopadhyaya."

A fraternal message was also later received from the executive committee of Communist International which

sent its greetings to the workers and peasants of India now carrying on an heroic struggle against imperialist oppression and feudal reaction upon one of the most important sectors of the world front.

Muzaffar Ahmad moved, and S. V. Ghate seconded, a resolution (see app. H) proposing the formation of the All-India Workers and Peasants Party. D. R. Thengdi and H. K. Sarkar also spoke and the resolution was carried unanimously.

It was moved from the chair that the party affiliate to the League against Imperialism (see app. J). This was carried unanimously.

A resolution (see app. K) was moved by S. S. Mirajkar and seconded by S. Kumarananda condemning the Trade Disputes bill and pledging the party to work for a general strike of the protest if it is passed. R. S. Nimbkar also spoke, and the resolution was carried unanimously.

A resolution expressing sympathy with the strike of Bauria was moved by G. Chakravarty and seconded by R. Mitra, S. N. Chakravarty moved an amendment, which was accepted, condemning the action of certain labour leaders in encouraging blacklegs. (See app. L.)

At this point B.G. Kastle, a school boy and a son of a Bombay mill-worker, gave a short speech in Hindi expressing the solidarity of the working class youth with the adult workers.

The draft of the constitution of the All-India Workers & Peasants Party, which has been prepared by a small sub-committee, was read out by B.F. Bradley, and discussed point by point. An amendment was moved by D.K. Goswami, that the general secretary of the party should be directly elected by the annual congress. This was supported by G.K. Chakravarty, K.D. Bhattacharji, M. K. Sinha, A. Roy and opposed by H.K. Sarkar, K.N. Joglekar, A.B. Banerji and R.S. Nimbkar.

The discussion was adjourned to the following day, and the session closed at 4.15 pm.

The delegates and visitors then proceeded to Shradhananda Park, where a procession of workers was formed



which marched with banners etc. to the Congress Nagar, shouting slogans: Down with the Simon commission! down with imperialism, down with dominion status, down with Nehru report, long live the independent Soviet Republic of India. A short meeting was held near the Congress Nagar, at which Sohan Singh and R. Mitra spoke.

On the fourth day the proceeding began at 1 pm at 121, Lower Circular Road, Calcutta. A. Das read out a manifesto from the Young Comrades League of Bengal to the conference.

H. K. Sarkar moved, and D. K. Goswami seconded, a resolution embodying the proposals of the party for the organisation of peasants. S. N. Chatterji moved a small amendment to the proposed demands, reducing the proportion suggested to the landlord from the peasants' produce. G. G. Chakravarty supported and A. C. Gupta opposed. The amendment was carried by a majority, and the resolution passed unanimously. (See app. N.)

The president moved a resolution (see app. O) protesting against the detention of three comrades under Regulation 111 of 1818. S. M. Shamsul Huda supported, and the resolution was passed unanimously.

The president also moved resolutions of sympathy with Dr B. N. Mukherjee (see app. P), of protest against the continued imprisonment of certain political convicts after their terms have expired (see app. Q) and of protest against the recent sentences on trade-union leaders (see app. R).

The remaining clauses of the proposed constitution of the All-India Workers and Peasants Party were read out and accepted without further discussion, the whole being referred to the national executive committee for final drafting (see app. M for draft)

The election of the national executive committee was then taken. It was proposed by B.F. Bradley on behalf of the drafting committee that four members be taken from each provincial party, except that of UP which should send two. Objection was taken to this, and it was agreed that should be four from each. During the nominations dis-

pute arose, and adjournment was moved and carried at 3.15 pm.

On resumption at 3.45 pm the president moved resolutions of protest, against the continued detention of two comrades after conviction on flimsy charges (see app. S) and against the preparations for war by the government against the Soviet Republic (see app. U). These were carried unanimously.

Election was resumed. The members from Bombay, UP and Punjab were nominated by representatives from those provinces and elected unopposed. Conflict again occurred over the election of Bengal members, and some of the Bengal delegates walked out. Misunderstanding had been created by outside influences, which were jealous of the growth of the party, and made an organised attempt to wreck it. The dispute was eventually settled and the national executive committee elected as follows:

Bombay: K. N. Joglekar, R. S. Nimbkar, S. A. Dange, S. V. Ghate.

Punjab: Sohan Singh, Bhag Singh, F. D. Mansur, M. A. Majid.

UP: P. C. Joshi, L. N. Kadam, Dr B. N. Mukherjee, Gouri Shankar Sharma.

Bengal: Muzaffar Ahmad, D. K. Goswami, H. K. Sarkar, G. K. Chakravarti.

The session closed at 5.45 pm.

#### APPENDICES

A: (Chairman's speech)

B: (President's speech)

C: (Resolution on arrest of comrade Johnstone)

This conference condemns the action of the government in arresting comrade J. W. Johnstone, the fraternal delegate from the League against Imperialism and for national independence, to the All India Trade Union Congress and to this conference. It considers that this arbitrary attack on the part of the government is a denial of the right of the oppressed and exploited masses, in particular the work-

ing class, to organise for their emancipation. It sees in it an expression of the fear of imperialist countries and the oppressed peoples of the colonial countries, for which the League against Imperialism stands.

This conference expresses its warmest fraternal greeting to comrade Johnstone, and assures him of its complete solidarity and agreement with the League against Imperialism.

Appendix D: Resolution on the arrest of three comrades of Punjab.

This conference regrets the absence of its members Abdul Majid, Kedarnath Sehgal and Ramchandra Kapur of Lahore, who on the eve of their departure for this conference were arrested by the police and detained, and expresses its wholehearted sympathy with them.

Appendix E: (Political resolution)

F: (Principles and policy)

G: (Trade union movement)

E: (Resolution for formation of all-India party)

This conference of delegates from the Workers and Peasants Party of Bombay, Punjab, United Provinces and Bengal, resolves that the Workers and Peasants Party of India be established with these parties as its provincial branches and other provincial committees and branches to be formed with the approval of national executive committee.

Appendix J: Affiliation to the League against Imperialism.

Resolved that the general secretary of the Workers and Peasants Party of India apply for affiliation to the League against Imperialism and for national independence.

Appendix K: Trade Disputes bill.

This conference condemns the Trade Disputes bill as a measure intended to stifle the trade-union movement. It also condemns the attitude adopted towards it by many leaders of the trade-union movement who have supported it and obscured the dangers to be working class of the proposals to establish conciliation machinery, and have

welcomed the bill as a whole, as a measure to suppress the growing militancy of the workers.

This conference considers that the only way to prevent the operation of this measure is to wage a vigorous campaign for the declaration of oneday general strike of protest on the day the bill is passed, and a further general strike if it is not rescinded, with the following demands:

- (1) Trade Disputes act to be rescinded.
- (2) Freedom of all workers to organise, and freedom for all unions including those of government employees, to affiliate to the Trade Union Congress.
- (3) Minimum wages of Rs 30.
- (4) Universal eight-hour work.

Appendix L: The Bauria Strike.

This conference expresses its sympathy and admiration for the five months struggle of 17,000 jute workers of Bauria, and assures them of its wholehearted support, and strongly condemns the mean tactics persuaded by the employers to break the strike with the help of some reactionary trade unionists and the police.

Appendix M: (Constitution)

Appendix N: Resolution on peasants.

Resolved that the party should forthwith proceed to organise, the peasants of India with a view to enable them to take their proper share in the political, social and economic emancipation movement of the country, on the following lines:

(By the word "Peasant" is meant one who does agricultural work with his own hand, and whose acreage does not exceed 60 bighas of land (20) acres. Field labours, small artisans and menials in the villages and the fishermen are also to be organised along with peasants)

Trained workers, preferably with a working knowledge of the art of healing, should be sent to the peasant centres, if possible with magic lantern and slides and pictorial posters for organising peasants' unions and picking up local men for continued work.

Peasants may pay a subscription fixed by their unions

under the direction of the provincial executive when they become members of the unions.

The peasants' cause is indissolubly connected with that of the industrial workers through the bond of common exploitation. The fact is also to be noticed that the industrial workers of India are generally recruited from among those of the peasantry who have been ousted from their land by zemindars or moneylenders or both.

The demands set forth here may be enforced by organised mass action eg, non-payment of taxes, peasant strikes etc. Immediate demands:

(1) Abolition of Permanent Settlement of Bengal and elsewhere, and of all intermediate tenures, ryotwari system, talukdari of Oudh, and the like, without any compensation.

(2) Grant of permanent right in land to actual peasants at a fixed rent.

(3) Fixing the maximum scale of rental for all arable land in proportion to the produce, so that in no case should the scale fixed exceed 10 per cent of the value of the actual produce.

(4) Legislation embodying the following:

(1) Right of free transfer of land without any Nazrana to the landlord.

(2) Stopping the transfer of land to non-agricultural people.

(3) Fixing the rate of interest on loan at 7 per cent per annum in the maximum.

(4) No decrees for an amount of interest exceeding that of the principal.

(5) Exemption from scale or attachment of Peasant's land required for the maintenance of his family on account of liabilities in the form of arrears of the rent, agricultural loans, etc.

(6) Realisation of abwabs and illegal cesses to be declared a cognisable offence.

(7) Introduction of immoral women in the fairs (hats and melas) to be made a cognisable offence.

(8) Reservation of sufficient pasture land for the village.

(9) Maintenance of stud bulls by local bodies.

5. State aid to peasants by means of cheap credit on cooperative basis for the purchase of modern machinery of agriculture and irrigation and for intensive cultivation.

6. Abolition of the Adhiar system (Nisambattai) of the Punjab, Kudd of Maharashtra, and Barga of Bengal but until it is achieved the peasant should give only 25 per cent of the produce to the owner of the land provided that the latter supplies him with seed etc. 20 per cent in the case of non-supply.

7. All navigable rivers to be declared free fisheries and fixity of tenure and rent for other fisheries.

*Political Demands:*

- (1) Universal adult suffrage on non-communal basis.
- (2) Village police to be paid from provincial revenues.

*Social Demands:*

Free compulsory primary education at state expense.

*Ultimate Demands:*

- (1) Abolition of landlordism in any form whatsoever without any compensation.
- (2) Abolition of all indirect taxation on necessities of life.
- (3) Establishment of peasant proprietorship in land.
- (4) Institution of graduated income-tax on agricultural incomes above Rs 2000 per year, subject to the abolition of all other taxes, direct or indirect.

*Appendix O: State prisoners.*

This conference emphatically condemns the action of the government in continuing the detention of comrades Santa Singh, Gajjan Singh, Basandha Singh, under regulation III of 1818 and congratulates these heroic fighters for Indian freedom.

*Appendix P: Dr Biswanath Mukherjee*

This conference sympathises with Dr Biswanath Mukherjee, the president of the Workers and Peasants Party

of UP in his suffering at the hands of hired ruffians of zamindars, and congratulates him on his fight for the interests of the peasants against their oppressor.

**Appendix Q: Life term Prisoners.**

This conference congratulates those heroic fighters for Indian freedom who are undergoing imprisonment, and emphatically condemns the government for not liberating those who were sentenced to transportation of life, and who have completed the customary twelve years.

**Appendix R: Sentences upon trade unionists.**

This conference emphatically condemns the action of the government in getting the conviction of Shibnath Banerjee, Singaravelu, Mukundalal Sarcar and others, on very flimsy charges, and in spite of the fact that Shibnath Banerjee was acquitted once before on the same charge, and Singaravelu and Sarcar were found not guilty by the assessors.

This conference considers these actions of the government as deliberate and systematic attempts to suppress the rising workingclass movement.

**Appendix S: Akbar Khan and Fazl-I-Ilahi.**

This conference condemns the action of the government in convicting Mohammad Akbar Khan to 10 years (including seven years for conspiracy while in prison) and Malik Fazl-I-Ilahi Qurban to three years, merely on the ground that they were students in the Eastern University at Moscow, and demands that they be immediately released.

**Appendix T: (Statement renumber of delegates etc.)**

**Appendix U: War preparations.**

This conference protests against the policy of encirclement and preparation for war pursued with increased vigour by the British government against the USSR and warns the working class against the disastrous consequences, economic and political, to India and to the Workers' Republic, if this war is actually launched.

This conference calls upon all organisations to conduct a country-wide propaganda, to protest against the war-policy, and to prepare for direct action by the workers in the event of war.

## **XXI. CONSTITUTION OF THE ALL-INDIA WORKERS AND PEASANTS PARTY**

### **1. Name**

The name of the party shall be "The All-India Workers and Peasants Party.

### **2. Object**

The object of the party is the attainment of complete independence from imperialism in general and British imperialism in particular and thorough democratisation of India based on economic, social and political emancipation of the masses.

### **3. Means**

The means shall be the party programme adopted from year to year at the annual session of the party or at any extraordinary congress called for the same purpose.

### **4. Extent**

The jurisdiction of the party shall extend over the territories including Indian states, known as India proper, adjoining territories under the influence of British imperialism.

### **5. Membership**

(A) The membership of the party shall be of two kinds:

1. Individual.
2. Affiliated body.

B. Any person who will subscribe to the object, constitution and programme of the party may be taken in as an individual member of the party subject to the approval of the national executive committee. Every individual member, except students and women will have to become a member of some workers or peasants union within two months of his becoming a member of the party. Special exception may be made by executive committee provincial or central.



(C) Candidates and members shall not be members of any communal organisation or take part in communal propaganda.

(D) The national executive committee of the party shall have power to affiliate with it any workers or peasants union which is in sympathy with the object and programme of the party. The party shall undertake the work of giving the members of affiliated unions class-conscious education in trade-unionism and politics, and shall assist the work of the unions by advice and propaganda.

(E) Members will have to pay party dues regularly and perform the organised work of the party assigned to them.

#### **6. Subscription**

(a) Each individual member of the party shall pay Rs 3 per annum to be collected by quarterly instalments. The executive committee may exempt or suspend anybody from subscription if it thinks so desirable.

(b) Affiliated organisations: The affiliated organisations shall pay subscription at the rate of Rs 3 per thousand or part thereof per annum.

(c) Donation of any amount will be received by the party from sympathisers.

#### **7. Management**

The work of the party shall be conducted as follows:

(a) There shall be an annual congress of the party. This congress or any special congress of the Workers and Peasants Party of India shall direct and control the policy and programme of the party.

(b) The annual congress of the party shall be held with all individual members and representatives of affiliated organisations on the basis of one per thousand or part thereof.

(c) Special congress: In case of emergency the national executive committee shall have power to summon a special congress.

(d) National executive committee: There shall be an executive committee of the party elected every year at

the annual congress from amongst the members (individual and affiliated).

(e) If between two elections there is any vacancy in the national executive committee, the committee shall itself fill up the vacancy from among the individual or affiliated members.

(f) The national executive committee shall be entrusted to carry out the programme of work of the party and shall be responsible to the congress for its work.

(g) The national executive committee shall submit a report of its work to the annual congress of the party.

(h) The work of the party shall be conducted under the guidance of the national executive committee which shall meet every three months.

(i) For facilitation of work of the party shall be divided into departments. One member of the national executive committee shall be placed in charge of a department. The national executive committee members in charge of such departments shall be responsible to the executive committee for work of the departments.

## **8. Office**

(A) Bearers. The national executive committee shall elect from among its members, one general secretary and treasurer. Departmental leaders shall also be elected from among the members of the executive committee.

(B) Meetings: At a meeting of the national executive committee, the executive committee shall elect its own chairman. At all meetings of the executive committee five members shall form a quorum. At least 14 days notice must be given prior to calling national executive committee meetings.

(C) Meetings of the NEC: A national executive member not attending two consecutive meetings without giving satisfactory excuse shall be considered to have vacated his seat and the national executive committee shall have power to fill such vacancy.

9. For a meeting of the congress the national executive committee shall give one month's clear notice to all

provincial committees and affiliated organisations who shall communicate same to all the members within a week of receipt.

10. The executive committee shall have power to frame general rules for carrying out the programme of the party.

The national executive committee shall have power to decide whether or not the party members shall participate in outside bodies such as the Indian National Congress, legislative and local boards, international organisations, etc.

### 11. *Discipline*

It is essential for party work that individuals should observe the requirements of a party discipline. Decisions once taken by the appropriate organ of the party must be obeyed.

Any member found acting against the interests of the party or violating its decisions can be expelled by the provincial executive committees. Such members shall have the right of appeal to the central executive committee.

### 12. *Organisation*

Provincial committee should be elected under the direction of the national executive committee of the party.

Branches should be set up in towns, talukas and villages under the direction of provincial committees.

Groups set up in factories, railways, mines, etc. should work on factory committees.

Fraction or groups should be set up in trade-union branches management committees, executive committees etc.; and also in provincial congress committees. This applies to the Trade Union Congress and All India Congress Committee.

A definite youth organisation should be brought into being to work in the existing youth movements, trade unions and congress committees etc.

A women section must be set up to work among women.

## OPERATION OF ORGANISATION

Study circles must be started forthwith in order that members may understand and correctly interpret party policy, and most important the application.

It is essential that all committees, branches and fractions should meet regularly, and keep up to date with current events. Therefore provincial executive committees must meet at least once per month. Branches and fractions or groups every week.

The entire branch membership shall be grouped in accordance with their special party work eg in trade union group, congress group, peasants group etc. Each member must belong to at least one group. Each group shall appoint a group leader who shall be responsible to the provincial or branch committee according to size.

Fractions or working groups must elect a group leader, who shall be responsible to the provincial or branch committee. These fractions must carry out decisions of a higher body. These decisions will be conveyed to the group by the group leader. After discussion and decision by the group or fraction on a resolution or nominations for official position etc.; the decision of the group must be binding on the whole of the group. The work of the party groups within the trade unions and congress committees shall be guided by the programme and policy of the party. The demands of the party must be pressed forward and the propaganda of the party thus advanced. This applies to groups operating in the TUC and AICC.

**Branch committees:** The branch committee shall coordinate the entire work of the town or village, and be responsible to the provincial committee to which it must report all work, and receive instructions and general line of policy, which it should convey to the groups. The branch committee must get reports of work from group leaders.

**Provincial committees:** These committees when elected shall coordinate the party activity in the province. They will receive instructions and policy on current affairs

from the national executive committee. The provincial committee in turn conveys this information to the branches, groups etc., and must receive report regularly from branches, groups etc. on work done, future meetings of organisations, election of officers etc. The provincial committee shall have power to deal with immediate problems, issue urgent manifestoes and leads in the name of the provincial committee, Workers and Peasants Party, and shall be responsible for the same to the national executive committee.

**Committees elected:** The branch chairman, secretary, executive members and treasurer shall be elected by the whole branch membership and with group leaders shall constitute the executive committee of branch.

**The Provincial Committees:** This committee shall be elected by an annual meeting of representatives, elected by party branches and groups and affiliated organisations throughout the province.

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## **XXII. TO THE ALL-INDIAN CONFERENCE OF WORKERS AND PEASANTS PARTIES**

The Communist International supporting everywhere the revolutionary movement of the toilers and the oppressed, through your organisation, albeit not part of our international body, send its greetings to the workers and peasants of India now waging a heroic struggle against imperialist oppression and feudal reaction upon one of the most important sections of the world front. The victorious progress of this struggle demands in our opinion above all, the creation of an independent class party of the proletariat, the uniting and raising of the isolated actions of the peasants to the highest political level, and the formation of a real revolutionary bloc of workers and peasants, under the

leadership of the proletariat not in the form of a united workers and peasants party, but on the basis of cooperation in deeds between the mass organisations of the proletariat on the one hand, and peasant leagues and committees on the other, for the overthrow of the imperialists and the destruction of the political and economic basis of colonial exploitation and slavery. The growing influence of the workers and peasants parties, and particularly the attendance of thousands of peasants' at your provincial conferences, proves that the understanding of the necessity for this militant bloc is penetrating among ever larger masses of toilers.

Your conference is taking place at a moment which may become the turning point in the history of the national revolution. The furious preparations of the British bourgeoisie for a new imperialistic slaughter, and the intensification of all forms of colonial plunder and terror, place the peoples of India in a position from which there is no other way out, but open and determined fight for the overthrow of the alien yoke. The revolutionary crisis in the country is maturing. In the strike movements various detachment of the working class (particularly the textile workers of Bombay) begin to come out as an independent force, conscious of the irreconcilability of its interests with imperialism and the chaffering bourgeoisie, and of its historic role as the champion of the national revolution. More painfully, and slowly, but with equal certainty, the oppressed, ruined and disunited peasantry is entering the path of organised struggle. Growing unemployment, ruin and hopelessness stir also the town petty bourgeoisie to revolutionary activity. The pent-up discontent of the masses, the despair, and the sublime hatred for the oppression, is already breaking forth to transform these isolated and defensive actions, attempt an aggressive fight against British imperialism and its native allies, that is the fundamental task before your conference.

The main obstacle to the victorious organised struggle against British imperialism and its feudal allies in the period of increasing terrorism and bloody repression is the

*influence of opportunist bourgeois nationalism.* Each day brings and will bring fresh proof of the treachery of the bourgeoisie, of its bringing before imperialist, of its intention to bargain and to come to terms with the latter behind the backs of the toilers of India and at their expense. Lately this treachery has assumed the character of the most cynical toying with the slogan of "independence" which the swarajists now throw out to deceive the masses, now tucked away in their pocket (the Motilal Nehru report), in order to penetrate into the Simon commission through the back stairs, and now raise again in a distorted shape, simultaneously with the "dominion status" slogan. However, crude and downright dishonesty this game may be, the penal regime and bloody repression of any exposing criticism particularly communist criticism, create a state of things under which the fraud of bourgeois nationalism still keeps its hold on a considerable section of the toilers. The struggle against this fraud compels you not only to determined at relentless exposure of the bourgeois treachery, but also through systematic every day activity to bring home this exposure, to the masses of the workers and peasants. The experience of the last movement in Bardoli showed how great the danger is still that not only the bourgeoisie, but even the usurers, who buy out the peasants' lands find themselves able to subordinate the movement of the peasants and to utilise it for their own ends. No declarations of readiness to combat opportunism have any revolutionary worth if there is no practical and actual proof of the waging of this struggle among the masses, and of the overcoming of the bourgeois influence is persistent every day work.

The greatest danger to the organisation of the masses, to the creation of a revolutionary bloc of the proletariat and the peasantry and to the proletarian leadership in this bloc, consists not only in bourgeois nationalism as such, but comes from the *organisations and groups of "prominent" petty-bourgeois intellectuals* actually influenced by the form of the "Independence League". The wavering and oscillating petty-bourgeois intellectuals of India are either

tied up with the system of landlordism and usury and preached the return to obsolete forms of pre-capitalist exploitation or they reflect the interests of capitalist exploitation being the agents of the bourgeoisie within the national movement. In either case they deny the importance of the class struggle, and whilst claiming to be "at the head" of the workers and peasants movement, they are fit in reality only to behead it. The better elements alone of the petty-bourgeoisie intellectuals with a revolutionary frame of mind may rise to the proletarian class viewpoint, and become a positive factor in the national-revolutionary struggle.

The "*Independence League*" at least in its present shape in fact assists official swarajism in its nefarious play with the slogans of "Independence" and "dominion status". Duly appreciating the very fact of the organisation of this League as proof that at the present time one cannot approach the masses without demanding independence and the overthrow of imperialism, your conference at the same time cannot fail to dissociate itself from the confusion and twaddle which characterises the advertised League platform with its lavish promises.

The masses must realise that all the talk of the organisers of the League in their platform about "nationalisation" and "socialisation" is an empty sound if in the same breath they recommend FOR THE PRESENT "impartial board for arbitration with a view to making strikes and lockouts unnecessary" (platform of the Bengal Independence League).

There cannot be a shadow of confidence in the verbal promises of the League generally, when in reality some of its leaders (the chairman of the Bengal branch of the League, S. C. Bose) continue to play the part of blacking organisers (betrayal of the last strike in Jamshedpur). The masses want from the political leaders of the petty-bourgeoisie not words but revolutionary deeds. The more determined and outspoken your criticism, the sooner the League will either expose itself as the left-wing of bourgeois nationalism, or having shaken off the politicians at



the head, will join, for a certain period and within certain limits, the national-revolutionary camp (retaining, however, even in this case their incorrigible half-heartedness, chronic wavering, and inevitable confusion in the whole of their politics and tactics).

The experience of all revolutions shows that the *peasantry* is inevitably deceived and defeated if it acts without the alliance and the leadership of the proletariat. In explaining to the peasantry the need for the workers and peasants bloc it is not difficult at the same time to explain to them, upon the grounds of the severe experience of the Indian revolution, the need for the leadership of the proletariat in this bloc. The Indian proletariat has demonstrated to all the toilers that it represents the most revolutionary force in the country, it has shown that it will stop at nothing in this struggle neither in the town nor in the village, that it marches and will march, in the front rank of the fight against British imperialism, feudalism, and the reformist bourgeoisie. The proletariat is helping and will help the peasantry which has been thrust by imperialism into a singular condition of humiliation, disunion and barbaric exploitation, shrouded in the falsehoods of religion, caste and nationalisms, to organise its force and to break the shackles of slavery, bondage, land hunger and imperialist and feudal oppression. The leadership of the proletariat, as the more concentrated, united, enlightened and hardened section of the toilers in this struggle, will secure the victory to the workers and peasants bloc. It is extremely important to demonstrate to the peasants in deeds and practice the significance of fighting alliance with the proletariat in their everyday struggle, already now.

The organisation of the workers and peasants bloc is based upon the common interest of the workers, peasants, and the town poor, in the fight against imperialism and feudal reaction. Nevertheless, it does not eliminate the class differences, and therefore, *it does not imply by any means the fusion of the workers and peasants into the party.* In the Great October revolution the proletariat gained the following of the peasantry of all the nations which inhabit

ed the former tzarist Russia just because it was organised into the independent Bolshevik Party, into a party armed with the Marxist-Leninist theory, irreconcilable to petty-bourgeois waverings, disciplined, self-sacrificing, capable of screening itself underground from the blows of the tzarist terror, at the same time never ceasing to take advantage of all the legal possibilities. The Indian proletariat, we feel sure, will follow this path.

The Indian proletariat will be the champion of the national-revolutionary fight and lead to victory of the peasantry, the town poor, and all the toilers, if it organises and consolidates the vanguard the Communist Party, which will educate the working masses in the spirit of a clear and unmistakable class policy in the realisation of the need for tremendous sacrifices in order to overthrow imperialism and bourgeoisie. The existing (only on paper) Communist Party of India, since it does not show any signs of revolutionary life, has no grounds to consider and even to call itself communist, although there are individual communists among its members. Under the conditions of imperialist terror by the feeble organisation of the Indian workers and the bullying of the reformist trade-union bureaucrats the task of building a genuine Communist Party will be considerably facilitated if at the same time broad revolutionary organisations of the workers are formed with the active participation of communists, or a broad left wing created in the trade-union movement upon the platform of consistent class struggle.

We expect that your conference will raise the question of participating in the building of such broad revolutionary mass organisation of the workers. These can be built only in the irreconcilable everyday struggle against imperialism and bourgeoisie, as well as against reformism and the petty-bourgeois groups under the cloak of socialism. The heroic steadfastness of the Indian proletariat in the strikes, the rapidity with which it gathers its forces although as yet only locally, the persistent endeavours to promote strike leaders from its own ranks —leaves no room, no doubt that

the elements for revolutionary mass organisations of the workers have matured.

We are convinced that your conference will discuss, and severely condemn the grave opportunistic blunders committed by the representative of the workers and peasants parties in the leadership of the strike movement, particularly in connection with the heroic struggle of the textile workers of Bombay. The source of these mistakes is the insufficiently clear stand against the reformist blacklegs (Joshi) the relentless exposure of whom is an indispensable condition for every victorious strike (and for strengthening the organisation of the proletariat in the course of its development). Having yielded to the demand of the trade-union bureaucrats at the commencement of the strike to refrain from exposing to the working masses the reformist treachery, the members of the workers and peasants parties had thus disarmed themselves also for the further struggle. Surrender to the reformists led inevitably to surrender to the employers, to the signing of the demands which were dictated by the chairman of the Arbitration commission, the flunkey of the Anglo-Indian bourgeoisie, a surrender all the more inadmissible since, as partial strikes which subsequently broke out proved the workers refused to give up the fight in spite of all their hardships. Only by learning from the severe lessons of the past struggle the working class will promote from its midst a consistent class leadership for the imminent, even more decisive strikes of the textile workers, railwaymen, miners and metal workers. With the growing intensity, of the revolutionary activity of the proletariat on one hand and the bloody onslaught of imperialism against the workers' organisation on the other (the Trade Disputes bill), the preparation and organisation of the general strike becomes the most urgent task of the current struggle. The Indian workers who performed wonders of endurance during the defensive fights in the fights of 1928, will show similar wonders of valour in the forthcoming aggressive fights.

In the work among the peasants the task is to pass from general slogans and to draw in the peasants to the real

revolutionary struggle in the defence of the everyday interests of the masses. Your organisations cannot afford to wave aside even seemingly backward manifestations of the anger of the peasantry. You must endeavour in every manifestation of this kind to discover the revolutionary substance and to transfer it to a higher level of class consciousness. In view of the tremendous variety of forms of land tenure in India, and the multitude of forms of pre-capitalist and semi-feudal bondage, the best way to embrace the peasant-movement in the various districts and localities is to organise from below peasant leagues led wherever possible by agricultural labourers and poor peasantry proved in the fight. It is necessary, not only in words, but in deeds, to endeavour to raise the isolated actions of the peasants to the level of an agrarian revolution. Under the slogans of abolition of every form and vestige of feudalism and semi-feudalism, of confiscation of the land of zamindars, usurers, priests and its transfer to the toiling peasantry while accruing in the first place the interest of the poor peasants, the agrarian revolution has been and remains the pivot of the national-revolutionary struggle in India.

In purging the leading bodies of your organisations from suspicious and unreliable elements, you will, of course, above all, be guided by the criterion of loyalty and devotion to the cause of the workers and peasants, remembering that the petty-bourgeoisie, not to speak of the bourgeois intellectuals, are closely tied up with the system of big landownership so that they must by all means combat the developing agrarian revolution.

Concerning organisational forms, your conference will have to discuss the question of separating the workers' organisations from the peasants' organisations, so that the former be ensured a clear-cut and consistent class development, and the latter the full embracing of the struggling peasantry. Provincial workers and peasants parties, after an appropriate distribution of their branches and members upon this class basis, are bound to develop in the future in revolutionary mass organisations of the workers on the one hand, into peasants leagues, and committees on the

other, which in turn will strive to gain the leadership inside existing peasant bodies or will build new peasants organisations. The periodical conferences and meetings of these mass organisations, called from time to time should constitute one of the forms expressing the militant bloc of the worker and peasant masses. If your conference accepts this point of view, it will put before itself the question of forming a committee for the coordination of the activities of the local workers and peasants organisations, having in mind chiefly their independent revolutionary development upon the class basis.

The Indian toilers, in their hard struggle, are nearing the fulfilment of their great historic task. The proletariat now organising its forces can rely on the support of the peasantry, of the poor of the towns, and of all the oppressed and exploited of India for whom there is no salvation except as the result of the triumphant revolution. It can rely upon the support of the proletariat of all lands and of the oppressed peoples throughout the world. We appeal to your conference to wage a determined fight against waverings and backslidings to criticise grave opportunistic blunders, to work out the revolutionary tactics for the forthcoming fights, to pass to such forms of organisation which, as international revolutionary experience has proved, open the possibility for winning the masses to the cause of the revolution.

**Down with British imperialism!**

**Long live the revolutionary fight of the workers and peasants of India!**

**Long live the revolutionary rising of the colonies!**

**Long live emancipated Soviet India!**

**Executive Committee of the  
Communist International**

## XXIII. THE CONFERENCE OF THE WORKERS AND PEASANTS PARTY OF INDIA

M. N. Roy

The revolutionary elements in the Indian nationalist movement are organising themselves. They have not yet found a unified leadership. But consciously or unconsciously, they all look for it in the right direction—to the proletariat. The speeches made and resolutions adopted at a number of subsidiary conferences, that took place simultaneously with the annual meeting of the National Congress, show to what an extent the conditions are ripe for the proletariat to exercise hegemony in the struggle for national freedom.

Only a few years ago socialism was practically unknown in India. Indeed, the attitude even of the radical petty bourgeoisie towards socialism was one of suspicion and hostility. The nationalist petty bourgeoisie were decidedly reactionary in social outlook. Rude realities of the present, and hope for a brighter future are liberating the petty bourgeoisie from the illusions about the dead past. Breaking away from feudal traditions, they find little solace in capitalism, which under the conditions of colonial exploitation does not offer their class any prospect of substantial economic betterment. They must gather courage to look further into the future. And there the beacon of socialism attracts their vision showing them the only way out of political suppression, economic ruin and cultural stagnation. As a result to this, the most characteristic feature of the political situation in India today is the rapidly growing popularity of socialism. All the petty bourgeois subsidiary organisations of the National Congress profess socialism.

It is significant that the profession of socialism by the petty bourgeois radicals coincides with their revolt against the policy of compromise with imperialism. This shows once again the inability of the petty bourgeoisie to play an independent political role. As soon as they attempt to break away from the leadership of the big bourgeoisie, they, in spite of themselves, tend to come under the influence of the

proletariat. They do so in spite of themselves, for the petty bourgeoisie by themselves are not a socialist class. And, as they do so in spite of themselves, they are not likely to advance in the revolutionary direction unless the proletariat meet them half way and make a fighting alliance with them for the realisation of the programme of national revolution, for betraying which they are revolting against the leadership of the big bourgeoisie. Their profession of socialism should be taken as indication of the opportunity to bring them under the revolutionary leadership of the proletariat. In the revolutionary struggle for national democratic freedom under the hegemony of the proletariat, some of them are likely to be entirely de-classed and become consciously socialist. On the other hand, there is the danger of their relapsing under the control of the big bourgeoisie or developing into a Socialist Democratic Party, if their objective (unconscious) advance towards the proletariat is not met promptly and tactfully.

The other danger of petty bourgeois radicalism crystallising into a reformist Social Democratic Party, has been revealed by the views expressed by some leaders of the movement on such vital question as the function of the state, means of capturing political power, relation of classes, confiscation of land, etc.

A picture of the situation gives a very clear perspective of future development, and shows our tasks. It is a tug-of-war for the leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle. Which way should it develop—towards constitutional agitation under the bourgeois leadership, or revolutionary fight under the hegemony of the proletariat? The petty bourgeoisie, which constitute the great bulk of the conscious and active nationalist ranks, stand in the middle, willing to move towards revolution, but lacking a determined, clear-sighted, unified leadership. And as this can alone come from the proletariat, the task before us is clearly defined.

During the meeting of the National Congress the following subsidiary bodies held their separate conferences: 1. All-India Youths League; 2. Swadhin Bharat Sangha (orga-

nisation of those who suffered persecution for revolutionary activity); 3. Socialist Youth League; and 4. All-India Volunteers Corps. The members of these bodies represent the most active element and majority of the Congress rank and file. Socially, they are all petty bourgeois intellectuals who are, as a rule, in very precarious economic condition. The Independence League, recently formed by the left wing leaders of the Congress, is at present the political leader of this revolutionary nationalist mass. The League also held its meetings during the sessions of the Congress. But being an integral part of the Congress, it did not assert separate existence. Consequently, radical and revolutionary forces, that constituted the majority in all the congresses and conferences (except the All-parties Convention) were without a unified political leadership. The Congress, and incidentally its clearly revolutionary subsidiary organisations, were dominated by the bourgeoisie standing outside it. The following quotations from the speeches made and resolutions passed in the subsidiary conferences show that the outcome of the Congress does not represent the realities of the situation, which is decidedly revolutionary.

In a statement made in the All-parties Convention in opposition to the dominion constitution the spokesman of the Swadhin Bharat Sangha said:

“Dominion status means that the entire politics of India will in the last resort be controlled by Britain in the interest of British imperialism. . . We are also of the opinion that the salvation of India and her masses lies in the establishment of socialist regime. We are afraid that the constitution sketched in the Nehru report is based on capitalist construction of society. We are not prepared to accept this constitution.”

In contrast to the compromise in the National Congress on the controversy over independence versus dominion status, the Youths' conference resolved that

“Complete independence and not dominion status should be the immediate objective of India.”

The conference called upon the youths to attain this goal by “all possible means”. This is an improvement upon the



independence resolution passed by the Congress in 1927, in which such restrictions were placed upon the means for the attainment of independence as reduced the whole resolution to empty verbiage.

By the second resolution the conference enjoined the youths to "combat capitalism by all available means". Capitalism was condemned as "detrimental to the best interest of the nation".

A third resolution indicated revolt against the cult of reactionary pacifism. This meant repudiation of Gandhi—the idol of petty bourgeois nationalism. This resolution calls upon:

"Young India to take up the new challenge of imperialism and to create in the country an atmosphere in which responsive violence should not be deprecated."

This resolution has direct bearing on the situation. A few days before the meeting of the National Congress a British police officer was killed at Lahore. The assassination was generally interpreted as an act of the nationalists avenging the death of Lajpat Rai of injuries inflicted by the police during a demonstration. All the nationalist leaders, including those of the Congress, rushed to denounce vehemently the perpetrators of the deed, as they had done on previous occasions. This treacherous and cowardly behaviour of the bourgeois leaders was always resented by the rank and file. Now it is openly condemned. The nationalist rank and file declare their determination to answer imperialist violence by revolutionary violence.

The Socialist Youths' conference met with the slogan, "We want Revolution, and not Reformation". We find the following statements in the speech opening the conference:

"Nationalism is the slogan of the middle class, while socialism is the cry of the toiling masses. The present social evils can be cured not by reform, but by revolution.

"Dominion status was the cry of vested interest, and it remains to be seen how far the extremist section of the capitalist class will become revolutionary in politics."

Thousands of young men went about in military uniform as nationalist volunteers, signifying what such demonstration can only signify, that is, an enthusiastic will on their part for a real fight for freedom. When this is compared with the previous uniform of loin-cloth and Gandhi-cap of homespun stuff, the implication of the development of the movement becomes evident.

The climax of the situation was a huge mass demonstration in which over twenty-thousand workers participated. Previously thousands of workers, particularly peasants, used to be herded into the meetings of the Congress to be lectured by the bourgeois leaders. They had nothing to say or do; but only to provide an imposing background for the reformist policy of bourgeois nationalism. They are no longer satisfied with the passive role. This year the demonstration was a part of the general revolt against bourgeois leadership, and it was the most important—the dominating factor in the revolt. The demonstration indicates the readiness of the proletariat to appear on the political scene as an independent force, which is the essential condition for its ability to be the new leader in the new stage of the revolution.

Meeting in this atmosphere of revolutionary development from all sides, the Workers and Peasants Party, whose driving force are the communists, was objectively the most important event of the moment. The Workers and Peasants Party is not the Communist Party, although the communists play in it the leading and dominating role. Several years ago it appeared on the scene as the first sign of radicalisation of the nationalist masses. As such the communists supported it, and aided its growth. Practically all the great strikes of the last two years were led under the banner of the Workers and Peasants Party. The object of the communists was to make this new party the rallying ground for all the nationalist revolutionary elements, to develop it into a revolutionary nationalist mass party which is a crying need of the moment.

The quickening of the process of radicalisation inside the nationalist rank during the last year placed the Workers

and Peasants Party in a very favourable position. Until now the party functioned in loose, decentralised manner, as practically independent provincial organisations. It was divided to reorganise the party on a national scale in a conference which should meet simultaneously with the National Congress at the same place.

The conference of the Workers and Peasants Party was very well attended. It magnificently reflected the revolutionary atmosphere prevailing in the country. But in doing so, it forgot, or rather neglected, its objective task—to mobilise all the forces of national revolution under its banner. Instead of coming out as the leader of the entire revolt, it placed itself in the position of one factor—indeed, the most advanced and most courageous factor—of the revolt.

In the main political resolution of the conference not only the Nehru report is rightly condemned as “a bourgeois democratic scheme of a not very advanced type”, but an attitude of hostile criticism is also taken towards the Independence League representing the opposition to the bourgeois right wing of the Congress. Indeed, no distinction is made between the two factions inside the Congress. When the petty bourgeois left radicals are trying to oust the bourgeois leaders from the leadership of the nationalist movement, they are not supported; on the contrary, they also were condemned as the enemies of the workers and peasants, in the same breath with the representatives of big capital and landlordism. The criticism levelled against the programme of the Independence League was essentially correct; but the well-merited criticism should have been accompanied by a positive attitude—an offer of united front on the common platform of anti-imperialist struggle. The relation with the rest of the nationalist movement is defined as follows:

“While the Workers and Peasants Party remains relatively weak and unorganised in the country, it will be necessary to follow the traditional policy of forming fractions within Congress organisations for the purpose of agitation, of exposing the reactionary leadership and

of drawing revolutionary sections towards the WPP. This policy, however, is only temporary. The WPP can have no intention of dominating or capturing the Congress. The function of its members within the Congress is purely critical. Our party members, therefore, cannot be allowed to take office in the Congress organisations."

A motion that the members of the party should join the Independence League with the purpose of capturing it was also rejected.

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1 February 1929, pp 93-94

#### XXIV. THE CONFERENCE OF THE WORKERS AND PEASANTS PARTY OF INDIA

PAUL SCHUBIN

The whole of the conditions of the approaching upsurge of the revolutionary wave found clear expression at the recently held conference of the Workers and Peasants Parties of India. If we compare the general tone of this conference with the attitude which the workers and peasants parties adopted not only two to three years ago, but even within the last twelve months, then we can unhesitatingly record a swing to the left which is characteristic of the general mood of the masses in the country.

The following essential reservations must be made however. In the first place the provincial conferences of these parties were superior to the central conference in that they revealed a great contact with the masses and raised in a more concrete form the questions of the struggle which is now proceeding; this contact with the masses found particular expression in the attendance of numerous peasant fraternal delegates. Secondly, the decisions of the central conference in a number of questions, in particular

the question of power, lagged far behind the sentiments of the broad masses. This fact found striking expression in that, while the conference in its resolutions speaks only of a "democratic organisations of the country", of a "democratic regime", the demonstrations of the workers which welcomed the conference delegates, had inscribed on their flags the slogan: "Long live the independent Soviet Republic of India!"

That the workers of Calcutta had not proclaimed this slogan "by chance" is to be seen from the fact that all three demonstrations of the workers which took place in the last two months (the demonstration which forced its way into the session of the National Congress, the demonstration which welcomed the Workers and Peasants conference, and finally the demonstration, attended by 20,000 workers, which took place at the end of January against the Simon commission), had on their flags the slogan of the Soviets. The whittling down of the slogans by the conference was shown in other questions, despite the fact that among the participants in the conference there were comrades who possess the confidence of the proletarian advanceguard.

What is the reason for this? It lies before all in the character of the workers and peasants parties themselves, in their composition of two classes, which is bound to result in rendering vague the proletarian line.

Owing to the lack of material it is impossible for the time being to give a more or less detailed evaluation of the work of the Central conference and to compare it with the Provincial conferences. We therefore confine ourselves to a number of decisions, which serve to illustrate both the positive and the weak sides of the work of the conference.

Among the positive sides of the conference there must before all be included the plain and clear estimate of the treacherous role of bourgeois nationalism and the emphatic criticism of the hypocrisy and the empty words of the leaders of the petty-bourgeois intellectuals. The political

resolution of the conference, in characterising bourgeois nationalism and the double game played by its left wing, proceeds from a class analysis of the forces in the camp of the national-liberation movement.

In the question of the relation to the Independence League this recently arisen organisation of the petty-bourgeois intellectuals, the conference, after an exhaustive discussion, decided not to join the League, but at the same time not to renounce the application of united front tactics in those cases in which it really conducts a fight for independence. The resolution points out that the radical points which have been inserted into the programme of the League, do not constitute demands for the realisation of which the masses must fight, but merely promises which the bourgeoisie gives in order to deceive the masses. The conference, therefore, demands from the petty-bourgeois intellectuals not words but deeds, not promises but proofs. In this respect the resolution declares:

“The unreal and hypocritical character of the programme is perhaps most definitely revealed by the fact that throughout there is not a word mentioned of the method by which the aims are to be achieved.”

Such a method of putting the question proves that the lessons of the severe defeats and the treacherous actions beginning from the year 1921 have not been lost on the workers of India, and that these experiences are beginning of to find expression, in this or that form, in the decisions of their mass organisations.

The concrete attitude of the conference in regard to the relations to the petty-bourgeois intellectuals and their groupings would not deserve any special emphasis, had there not at the same time been put forward in the press opinions which seek to revive in the workers and peasants parties the old illusions, to cause them to exaggerate the importance of the leading organisations of the intellectuals and to induce them to come to in understanding with them.

How powerful, and at the same time how very danger-

ous, these illusions are, can be seen from two articles by comrade Roy, one of which appeared in the bourgeois-nationalist *Forward* before the December conference, and contained "Advice" to the Workers and Peasants Party, while the other appeared in the *Inprecor*. (No 6, 1 February 1929) already after the conference of the Workers and Peasants Party and contains a very decided criticism of this conference.

In the first article "Appeal to the Independence movement" (*Forward Annual*, 1928, pp 57-58) comrade Roy writes:

"In view of this historic significance of the Calcutta Congress (this refers to the National Congress—P. Sch.) all fighters for the freedom of India must heartily greet the rise of the Independence League. The nationalist movement has reached a parting of the ways. This can no longer be denied. Otherwise, the formation of the Independence League would be premature. The rude reality of the situation is that one section of the movement has decided to compromise with imperialist domination, while the other has declared its determination to overthrow foreign rule. In Calcutta the Congress must commit itself clearly to the one or the other point of view. In order to have the Congress remain faithful to the Madras resolution, the Independence League must move the rejection of the Nehru report by the Calcutta Congress. Failing to do this the League will lose the right to a separate existence..."

Comrade Roy, in proposing to the Independence League that it bring forward at the National Congress at Calcutta resolution on the "Convocation of a Constituent Assembly on the basis of general election" writes further:

"...In course of this agitation (for the convocation of the constituent assembly—P. Sch.) the National Revolutionary Party (into which the Independence League should develop) will rally under its banner the majority of the nation..."

Let us leave on one side comrade Roy's main slogan, which aims at the convocation by the National Congress

of a constituent assembly, and thereby fosters the extremely harmful illusions, which have been instilled into the masses by Motilal Nehru, that it is possible by a "fight" of the Congress to achieve the emancipation of India.

Still more characteristic of the present attitude of comrade Roy is the heroic future he promises the Independence League at its cradle. Beneath its flag there will gather the majority of the nations. The mere fact of its existence will mean a turning point in the national revolutionary movement. Finally, should this mountain labour and produce a mouse, if it succeeds in obtaining from the Congress of Calcutta... what? fidelity to the resolution of Madras, ie to the resolution which proclaimed as its aim complete independence, but which, in accordance with the chief principle of the National Congress, must be achieved by "peaceable and lawful means". As is known, by this resolution, in the course of a year, not only have the walls of British imperialism not collapsed, but not even a single hair of the head of Simon has been injured. Why comrade Roy expects a miracle from the repetition of this resolution remains a mystery.

*Inprecor*, Vol 9, No 16,  
29 March 1929, pp 319-20

## XXV. THE CONFERENCE OF THE WORKERS AND PEASANTS IN INDIA

P. SCHUBIN

It must be said that in these latest prophesies of comrade Roy only the designation "Independence League" is new. Last year the same prophesies were made but proceeding from a broader circle, in regard to the *Republican League*, which at bottom, is an equally vague organisation of intellectuals, with the same eloquent *Nehru Junior*, to whom his elders, as was clearly seen at the last



*National Congress*, allot the role of "chief persuader". It is precisely from this standpoint and that one must regard as a step forward that appraisal of the League, based on facts, which is given in the resolution of the conference:

"In more than one strike the efforts of the Independence League leaders have been directed towards stopping the strikes in the interests of a national industry. Some leaders of the school do not hesitate to avow themselves fascists.

"Although the Bengal League presents a moderate wing in relation to some other sections, the nature of the League as a whole is fundamentally the same."

Further in the political resolution of the conference concrete facts are cited which confirm the above-quoted characteristics.

How does comrade *Roy* justify his negative attitude towards the standpoint of the conference on this question? Instead of either confirming the fresh characterisation of the League which he made quite recently, as the coming national revolutionary party, which will unite under its flag the majority of the nations, or repudiating it and recognising the exposing criticism of it made by the conference. Comrade *Roy* prefers to adopt the third course in that speculating upon the bad memory of the reader of his article and the inattentive attitude of the readers to the resolution of the conference, he builds up his accusation upon incorrect and distorted facts.

In the main *political resolution* of the conference not only the *Nehru Report* is rightly condemned as "a bourgeois democratic scheme of a not very advanced type but an attitude of hostile criticism is also taken towards the Independence League representing the opposition to the bourgeois right wing of the Congress. Indeed no distinction is made between the two factions inside the Congress. When the petty bourgeois left radicals are trying to oust the bourgeois leaders from the leadership of the national-

ist movement they are not supported; on the contrary, they also got condemned as enemies of the workers and peasants, in the same breath with the representatives of big capital and landlordism. The criticism levelled against the programme of the *Independence League* was essentially correct; but the well-merited criticism should have been accompanied by a positive attitude—an offer of united front on the common platform of anti-imperialist struggle.”

These accusations by comrade Roy which are directed not against the League but against the Workers and Peasants conference, are based on incorrect representation of the facts, are extremely unjust and politically false. It is incorrect to say that the political resolution made no distinction between the two factions inside the Congress. It gave a class characterisation of one as well as the other, and at the same time pointed out that the League represents, besides bourgeois tendencies, “a hesitating and as yet confused move on the part of a section of the petty bourgeoisie towards a revolutionary policy!”

It is not true to say that the League is condemned in the same breath with the representatives of big capital and landlordism, for the latter are accused of open compromises with the imperialists. The leaders of the League are, lawyers, accused of playing with revolutionary phrases. It is not true that the resolution confines itself to criticism without raising the question of the possibility of a united front, for the resolution states in black and white:

“The Workers and Peasants Party can only work with the Independence League in a united front, on the basis of the propaganda for independence”, which in spite of its frivolous character has objectively some value.

If one must criticise this part of the resolution, then it is not on account of the ignoring of the united front but on account of its insufficiently clear formulation of the

conditions under which this united front can be carried out.

Comrade Roy magnanimously permits the conference to criticise the programme of the League ie to do that which he omitted to do when the League made its first entrance in the political arenas. Now however when the League has proceeded to *deeds* this is of course already inadequate. One must expose normally not on the basis of the programme but on the basis of its practice, on the basis of concrete political acts, which are more intelligible and palpable to the masses than its programme. It is difficult to understand why comrade *Roy* refused to recognise a criticism of this sort: for if anything can really help the *League* to display ability to fight against imperialism in any form or to any extent, if there are elements in the *League* which can be won for the revolutionary movement, then this can be achieved only as a result of such thorough, concrete and definite criticism.

That the conference of the Workers and Peasants Party is in need of criticism there is not the least doubt, but it does not require a criticism which would drag it back to the right, into the petty bourgeois swamp.

The mistakes, the exceedingly serious mistakes of the conference are mainly due to the fact that it did not realise the necessity of the leading role of the proletariat in the anti-imperialist fighting bloc of the toilers. Only a small portion of the Indian comrades perceived that the organisation of the Workers and Peasants bloc, based on the community of interests of the workers, peasants and city poor in the fight against imperialism and against feudal reaction, does not abolish differences between workers and the peasantry, that it does not envisage their amalgamation or formless merging into a single party. The experiences of the Indian revolution have already shown, the peasantry, that they have been deceived and defeated precisely because the proletariat pressed to be unprepared to realise its leadership in the national revolutionary struggle.

In the last few years and especially in the course of the last year, the situation has changed. The proletariat of India has already shown by deeds, that it is the most revolutionary force in the country. It has shown all toilers that it does not stop at any sacrifice in its fight; it has demonstrated that only the working class can help the peasantry to organise its forces and to emancipate itself from imperialist slavery and the feudal yoke. The experience of the last few years, and in particular the experience of the workers and peasants parties, have shown that the proletariat can solve this historical task only if it organises and steels its advanceguard into a Communist Party which educates the broad working masses on the basis of a plain clear class line.

The circumstance that the left wing of the trade unions in spite of the assistance rendered it by the majority of the workers, had not been able to get rid of the handful of reformist leaders who exert power over the trade unions is to be attributed to the lack of communist leadership.

Thus at the *Trade Union Congress of India* held recently the left wing, which in spite of the fact that the newly arisen left trade unions, in accordance with the status, were not represented, possessed almost half the votes (36 votes were given for the candidate of the right and centre, *Nehru*, for the position of the chairman of the general council, and 20 votes were cast for the candidate of the left, the railway workers (*Kulkarni*) did not put through its proposals and, what is the chief thing, had not prepared the proletariat for the approaching extraordinarily severe and decisive strikes.

The same thing happened at the *conference of the railway workers of India* at which reformists, thanks to a very trifling and falsified preponderance of votes, retained the chief position in their hands and are already preparing to betray the approaching railway workers strike.

At the *conference of the workers and peasants parties itself*, in spite of the criticism of the reformist leaders, the

question of the approaching strike themselves was not put in a sufficiently concrete form, and the slogan of a general strike was merely of a demonstrative character. The conference did not take into consideration the severe lessons of the strike of the textile workers in *Bombay*, and did not once raise the question of the strategy and the forms of organisation of the coming fights.

The objective situation demands the organisation of the proletariat advanceguard in a *Communist Party*. There exist all the elements for such an organisation. Every big strike, in which the Indian proletariat displays an extraordinary devotion, heroism, and tenacity, is accompanied by the coming forward of active workers from the factories, workshops and mines. The Indian proletariat sends its best fighters, its future leaders into the strike committees, which are conducting the strike not only against the government and the employers but also against the reformist strike-breakers. The ten thousands of workers who during the protracted strikes went to the villages for a time, are mass organisers of the peasantry, who ensure the leading role of the proletariat in the revolutionary bloc. All subjective elements for the organisation of communist mass party already exist.

Neither terrorism nor the provocations of the imperialists, neither shooting nor imprisonment, not even the whole system of colonial enslavement, which is striving to isolate the proletariat of India from international revolutionary experience is capable of preventing the rise of a mass Communist Party in India.

**XXVI. FROM MEERUT RECORD**

P 1295

CPI Meeting 27, 28 and 29 December.

M. A. Chairman

1. Adhikari admitted to the party.
2. Hasrat Mohani and Hasan expelled.
3. Question of Swami was raised by Nimbkar.

Hamid stated that the press was sold by him and money utilised for the personal advantage and hence he was expelled.

4. The question of making the party active, doing propaganda in the name of the CPI decided upon.
5. Mirajkar was made a member of the party.
6. Decision to have the head office in Bombay.

Decision to have 10 members in the CE in the following proportion. Bombay 5, Calcutta 3 and the Punjab 2. Names of EC members: (1) S. S. Mirajkar, S. A. Dange, R. S. Nimbkar, K. N. Joglekar, S. V. Ghate. (2) Muzaffar Ahmad, Halim, Shamsul Huda. (3) Abdul Majid, Sohan Singh.

9. The S. in Bombay to function as the CE between the EC meetings which are fixed up quarterly. 4 including the general secretary to form the quorum.

10. General secretary S. V. Ghate.

11. Comrade Joglekar suggested that Kulkarni be in the CE rejected.

12. General secretary to call a meeting every month.

13. Thesis laying down the programme and policy of the party to be proposed.

14. Application to be made to committee for affiliation.

28/12. K. N. Joglekar chairman. Shamsul Huda's complaint that he was neglected by M. A., Spratt and Bradley were deputed to look into the complaint. The thesis for the comintern was gone into and it was decided to

accept it as a basis for work. Possibilities of an open party to be tested.

29/12. K. N. J. chairman:

(1) Usmani to go to Punjab for organising N. W. R. Hamid for Jabulpore.

(2) Central organ of the party—to be published from Calcutta. Muzaffar to look into Hindi and Bengali papers and criticise them.

(3) Recruitment of members: Sohan Singh and Kul-karni to be admitted. Local members should recommend admission, which should if ratified one can become a member.

(4) Plan for enrolment should be drawn up.

(5) Mirajkar, Muzaffar, Joglekar were suggested as delegates to the ECC. It was finally decided to select one from the first 2. M. A. selected later.

P 1300

Two foolscap half-sheet having on them the following writings amongst other scribbling:

THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA

Muzaffar Ahmad chairman

1. Credentials of Adhikari—decide to admit him.
2. Expulsion of Hasrat Mohani and Hasan—agreed upon.
3. Question of Swami raised by Nimbkar, Hamid's statement that he sold the press.
4. He should be expelled. To be communicated to these people.
5. The question of reorganisation of the party.  
What is going to be the future character?  
Our legal position should be upheld. Organising and propagating, as a communist party.  
Where should the head office be?—Bombay.

5 from Bombay—S. V. G.            S. S. M.  
    R. S. N            S. A. D.  
    K. N. J.

3            Calcutta—M. A.            Halim  
    Huda

2 Punjab—Abdul Majid—Feroze—Sohan Singh

Executive

R. S. Nimbkar	Muzaffar Ahmad	Abdul Majid
S. A. Dange	Halim	Sohan Singh
K. N. Joglekar	S. M. Shamsul Huda	
S. S. Mirajkar		
S. V. Ghate		

(1) The five in Bombay should function as an EC between the EC meetings. 4 including the general secretary will form the quorum of the EC.

(2) Full EC should meet every quarterly—(Adhikari to be co-opted).

(3) General Secretary  
       S. V. Ghate

It should

S. S. Mirajkar's application for membership is accepted.

Com. Joglekar suggested that Kulkarni should be a member of EC. It was not accepted.

Apply for affiliation to the Comintern?

EC—meet weekly at Bombay. General secretary should call a meeting every week.

Thesis to be prepared.

P 1303

A note sheet—the left hand quarter portion of which is missing—with certain manuscript notes on it. The notes run as follows:

Muzaffar

Mirajkar

Adhikari's suggestion.



Local members should recommend admission to CPI, and the central EC should ratify such recommendation.

For the enrolment, general secretary should draw out a plan of enrolment of members...

Mirajkar was suggested as a delegate to ECC.

Muzaffar suggested...

Joglekar suggested—because he is elected to L.A.I.

Usmani—to organise NWR.

Hamid—GIP paper.

for Delhi textiles—one man should be sent from Dange...

Central organ of the party.

They should recruit members to the CPI—should be in English...

as soon as possible should be printed in Calcutta—  
other papers should continue—

Muzaffar to look into Hindi and Bengali papers—

Recruitment of members—immediate—

Sohan Singh—to be admitted.

P. C. Joshi—to be left for the present.

Kulkarni—to be admitted.

28/12/28

(1) Chairman—K. N. Joglekar

(2) Shamsul Huda, wants to know why he is being charged by Muzaffar of having made any mistake, "Halim"

(3) He is not given proper treatment? Bradley and Spratt to look into the case.

(4) Discussion of theses. The interpretation is that this should be taken up as a basis and to be changed according to the conditions in India.

Possibilities of an open party should be tested.

29/12/28.

Chairman, K. N. Joglekar.

P 1309

A piece of paper having the following written on it:

CPI

*Agenda*

1. Expulsion of Hasrat Mohani and Hasan.
2. Question of re-organisation and reconstruction of the party.
3. Any other business.

Sd. S. V. Ghate

26/12/28.

P 1310

A piece of paper with the following matter written on it:

CPI

Fixing of Nos not of central executive.

3. From Bombay, Bengal and Punjab.

2. From UP

=Total II

Bombay

Punjab

(1) Dange

(4) Sohan Singh

(2) Joglekar

(5) Abdul Majid

(3) Ghate

(6) Feroze Din

Bengal

(7) Muzaffar Ahmad

(8) Dharani Kanta Goswami

(9) Hemanta Kumar Sarcar

UP

(10) P. C. Joshi

(1 Seat Vacant)

Head Quarters

Calcutta

General Secretary

Muzaffar Ahmad

Treasurer—Dharani Kanta Goswami

Party Funds—raise funds

## XXVII. MANIFESTO OF CPI TO ALL WORKERS

Comrades,

The working class is now entering upon a period of trouble and suffering, of great dangers and great opportunities, which it will have to face solidly as a class if it is to avoid many further years of slavery and degradations. We have recently passed through big strikes, and we shall soon have to fight many more. A big crisis is coming in industry and the government is showing in the TD bill and PS bill what sort of reception it is preparing. The political events of the last few months, constituting a series of demonstrations by the masses of the people and of answering acts of repression by the government, show that a crisis in the struggle for national freedom is also approaching. The news from Afghanistan, from China, from America and from Europe, all go to show that a big world-war is coming in the near future. Then we shall see probably a great attack by all imperialist powers to crush the Workers' Republics of Russia. Or one group of imperialist robbers will fight another group, and there will be a hideous slaughter of the masses of the people by war, by disease and by famine, and awful suffering, through high prices and low wages, hunger and slave-driving for the remainder, all for the selfish purposes of the capitalist masters of the world.

In spite of all efforts lasting for many years now, to improve them the workers are still living in terrible conditions of poverty, sickness, ignorance and oppression. They are gradually developing a consciousness of these evils and a will to abolish them. They are now slowly realising that in order to get better conditions, they have only one means to depend upon—their ability to fight solidly for them against the capitalist class. And in spite of all difficulties and defeats, they are fighting, and will continue to fight.

But the working class cannot remain satisfied with the struggle as it is. The trade-union movement even as it

exists, is weak and disorganised, and misled by the bourgeoisie strikes fail more often than not. The capitalist government uses all means of violence and coercion to break the workers' fight. The future under capitalism promises only blacker reaction, more terrible oppression, destruction of the trade unions, worse condition of life. The system of imperialism all over the world is declining and collapsing and as it falls, it drags down with it the working class and the poor and helpless into the lowest depths of misery.

The working class must fight against this. The working class is the only force which can withstand the downward rush of civilisation. It is the only force which can reorganise society a new, and abolish the evils of the system as it exists. The working class while fighting for the improvement of conditions must aim further and higher. It must aim at no less than the reorganisation of society on a better basis—must fight for workers' rule, for socialism, for communism. The bourgeoisie and of the officials and police, in seeking a cause for the 'unrest' for the workers, all blame communism. We thank them for showing that communism is the right policy for the workers.

Comrades! the crisis is approaching. Very soon we shall be crushed under the new Trade Disputes act. Very soon war will again be upon us. Again the bourgeois nationalists of the congress are putting themselves at the head of the mass movement, as they did seven years ago, simply in order to betray it. Why did the great mass movement of that time collapse, leaving imperialism still victorious and the masses still in the depths of degradation of poverty? Because the leadership was in the hands of the bourgeoisie, who were drawn by their class interests towards imperialism, and betrayed and deceived the masses.

Yet still today bourgeois 'leaders' are controlling the movement. In spite of all their talk of "the Masses" they are still burning foreign cloth—as if that will get independence! They are still giving imperialism 'another chance' as if they are not certain that imperialism is their enemy! The bourgeois labour leaders are still trying to

enter into cooperation with imperialism through the Whitley commission. They still hold back the development of the labour movement splitting and disorganising it for their own class purposes.

How can we stop this nonsense? How can we see that the masses are properly led to the struggle? Only by taking the lead from *our own hands into the hands of the working class*. Only by pressing the real policy of the working class ie, workers' political party, the Communist Party.

Communism is based on the *class-struggle*. In society now we see more and more clearly two classes—owners and workers.

The owners are few, rich, powerful and educated, they control the government, the police, the law courts, the prisons, the army and navy, the newspapers, the industries. The workers are many, poor, weak and ignorant, they are always oppressed by the forces at the disposal of the capitalists. The owners, in order to get their riches from the work done by the workers, exploit them to the utmost; they get as much work out of the workers as they can and pay them as little as they can. This is the class-struggle which the workers all know which shows itself in poverty, insanitation, ignorance, child mortality, in victimisation, suppression of the workers' political activity, the Trade Disputes bill, starvation, beating and shooting upon workers on strike.

The policy of the Communist Party to end this struggle, which brings with it so much misery and degradation, is for the workers to *fight and win it*. The workers must defeat the capitalists decisively, must out them, and become themselves the owners of industry, and possessors of state power, controlling education, health policy, the police-force and law courts, the army and navy, and all the apparatus of society. Then, and only then, when there have been established workers' rule, socialism, will the working class be properly cared for, properly paid, not exploited, educated free.

The working class must conquer power, as the working class of Russia has done, and establish its own dictatorship, when the efforts of the capitalists to get back what they have lost, will be suppressed with all the power of the state. Then the wealth and power wielded today by the capitalists will be used, not as new for selfish purposes, but for the advancement of civilisation, the feeding of the poor, the education of the ignorant, the healing of the sick. Then under the dictatorship of the workers, will be established that socialism which all progressive thinkers for centuries have imagined when all men and women will really be equal, when "from each will be taken by society according to his ability, and to each will be given according to his need".

Will the workers' trade unions do this? No, they cannot. The Communist Party calls upon all workers to join trade union, and build them up as strongly as possible, and take part in their fight for improvements. It is necessary that the union be freed from bourgeois congressmen and imbued with the militant policy and theory of communism. But the unions alone cannot conduct the fight for political power, cannot establish the dictatorship of the workers, nor bring about socialism.

Will the Workers and Peasants Party do these things? No; again, the Workers and Peasants Party is a necessary stage. It gathers together all forces for the first fight against imperialism for the independence of the country. The workers and the unions must support the Workers and Peasants Party and help and take the lead in the policy for which it stands—the fight of the poor, the peasants, the clerks, the shopkeepers, as well as the workers, against imperialism and for national independence.

But the workers' own party, the Communist Party is also needed—is needed most of all. The working class is the most important factor in the struggle of the poor masses. The workers are the only section which will fight determinedly and consciously, and the section which can fight most effectively. The peasants will be but passive

followers of the working class; the petty bourgeoisie will vacillate from side to side. Only the workers, drilled and disciplined in factory life and exploitation, in command of the vital industrial forces and lines of communism of society, can and will fight to the end. And the workers are the only section which will fight for more than their immediate aims—they with a social consciousness, a knowledge of the needs of the situation, they will fight for socialism.

This is the need of the Communist Party to organise and discipline and lead the fight of the workers, and this of all the oppressed, out of the deep pit of imperialism, on to the heights of socialism. All the best and most conscious and militant of the workers must band themselves together in the ranks of the Communist Party, and educate and train and discipline themselves, to form that vanguard which alone can lead the masses. (The Communist Party is still very small and very young. It has a great and difficult task to perform. It is the special object of the repressive measures of the enemy. It has little time in which to prepare itself. Big crisis are coming in the very near future, in which the working class must act decisively if it is to be saved. The workers must organise now their vanguard the Communist Party, if they are to emerge victorious. We call upon all workers to join the Communist Party, and help forward the great cause of the exploited and oppressed throughout the world.

**“Down with imperialism”!**

**Up the communism!**

**Join the Communist Party today!**





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