

★ **U. P. Communist Candidates: See Also Inside** ★

# YUSUF-Cawnpore Workers' Leader

**S. S. YUSUF**, the leader of Cawnpore workers and Communist candidate for the U.P. Legislative Assembly from the Cawnpore General labour seat, is thirty-six years old. His political life began towards the end of the twenties. Twelve out of these last sixteen or seventeen years of his life have been spent in 14 jails of India!

In prison Yusuf suffered almost every kind of punishment. In jail struggles at least four times, in Montgomery (1931), Multan, (1932), Sabarmati (1939) and Agra (1940); he was severely beaten. Four times he had to resort to prolonged hunger strikes: Montgomery (1930): 15 days; Multan (1932): 40 days; Sabarmati (1934): 7 days; Deoli Detention Camp (1940): 16 days.

Outside jail he was harassed and hunted by the Police and was never allowed to stay at any one place long. He was repeatedly 'externed' from the Punjab, Delhi, Bombay and Gujerat till he settled down in Cawnpore in 1936. From Delhi he was 'externed' four times and from the Punjab twice.

Forced by Police repression, most of the time he had to work illegally under various names. In the Punjab he was Sant Singh Chaddha; among the Madanpura workers at Bombay he worked as Mohammed Shafi; again in Ahmedabad (where the Police was working its hardest to track down the "Bolshevik leader" from Bombay!) he called himself Yusuf. He took his present name when he came to Cawnpore.



## Builder Of Revolutionary Workers' Movement

Apart from the Police, employers' agents also tried to make things difficult for him. Several times he was attacked by them; five times (in Ahmedabad, Delhi and Cawnpore), the attacks were made with axes and other deadly weapons and each time, he was left for dead. But every time some workers reached the spot and Yusuf's life was saved.

Notwithstanding these difficulties and hardships, Yusuf has succeeded in helping to lay the foundations of a revolutionary working class movement in four chief workers' centres in the country, Delhi, Bombay, Ahmedabad and Cawnpore.

He has the unique distinction of having organised and led the largest number of workers' strikes in the country. He has taken a leading part in more than 150 strikes, which is considered to be double the number of strikes led or organised by any other working class leader in India.

In Ahmedabad alone, though working illegally, he directly led 53 big strikes of ten to twenty thousand workers. In his brief stay at Bombay, he participated in 34 strikes! In Cawnpore, he led three general strikes of fifty to sixty thousand organised textile workers, apart from innumerable smaller strikes in various mills.

Few people in the country have had such a hard and inspiring life as Yusuf.

Sant Singh, for that was his original name, was born thirty-six years ago, in a poor middle-class Khatri household in a village in Jhelum district of the Punjab. His mother died when he was only four months old. His grandmother looked after him till he was about eleven. He read upto the fifth standard in a middle school. His people wanted him to become a village teacher or patwar.

But at the age of eleven his maternal uncle asked him to give up his studies and took him

to Lahore for training in some handicraft.

At the age of eleven and a half, he was put in a harmonium shop, and thus began his independent life. The employer, instead of teaching him to make harmoniums, used him as a coolie. Young Sant Singh revolted and was a waif on the streets till he was employed as a travelling salesboy for a brand of toothpowder and some other medicines. At the age of twelve, he was going up and down the North-Western Railway selling these quack medicines.

In a few months' time he bade good-bye to this job and to Lahore. At the age of twelve, and a half years he became a 'biscuit-walla'—a street hawker, selling biscuits in the lanes of Delhi!

## Life, A Hard Task-Master

Before he was thirteen he gave up this profession also and went to Lalmusa in the Punjab to work as a railway coolie. At fourteen, he served in a sweetmeat sellers' shop, washing dirt, utensils. In his sixteenth year he became a fan-puller in a railway babu's bungalow and participated in the first workers' strike of his life.

On his dismissal from there, he returned to Lahore and took a job in the local power house. He started as a coolie but later he was promoted as assistant fitter.

However, he felt restless here also. Under the impact of the rising wave of the revolutionary movement in the country, the spirit of youthful adventure was being replaced by a purposeful seriousness in life.

While working as assistant fitter he burnt midnight oil to educate himself. He joined a night school and learnt Gurmukhi, Urdu and English with a perseverance and determination which surprised his circle of friends, but which were to become the driving force of his subsequent life.

Then, at the age of 18

or 19, he came to Delhi and secured a job in the Delhi Cloth Mill as fitter. In Delhi he came in close contact with some workers of a terrorist party. The same year, 1928, he organised the first workers' strike in his own mill. The strike was crushed and he was thrown out of the mill.

He heaved a sigh of relief and became a professional revolutionary at the age of twenty!

## Into Communist Party

After his dismissal from the mill, Yusuf began to organise the workers on the lines of revolutionary trade-unionism. This was the time when the reformist leaders like Deshbandhuji had sway over the Delhi workers. The workers' interests were systematically betrayed in the interests of the capitalists.

Yusuf fought hard and soon built up a nucleus of militant workers and a strong workers' movement. In this struggle he lived down his illusions regarding Gandhism.

Now he wavered between Terrorism and Communism. He followed attentively the proceedings of the Lahore Conspiracy Case (trial of Bhagat Singh and his comrades) and the Meerut Conspiracy Case (trial of 31 Communists).

The issue was decided when he was arrested in the 1930 Civil Disobedience Movement and sentenced to one year's imprisonment. In jail, he studied Marxism and became a Communist.

On his release, jointly with Bahal Singh (one of the present leaders of the Delhi Communists), he organised a branch of the Navjawan Bharat Sabha in Delhi and began to work in the Kirti Kisan Party also.

In 1931, he was again arrested in the second Civil Disobedience Movement and sentenced to nine months.

After his release he was interned in a part of Delhi and

then externed from there. He went to the Punjab. He was chased out of there also. Once again he returned to Delhi and began his career of illegal work. Soon he was spotted out and put in the Red Fort. The Police tried to implicate him in one of the many conspiracy cases which were going on then. Failing to do that, they had to release him. He was again given a few hours and asked to clear out of Delhi.

He gave the Police the slip and disappeared from Delhi. He came to Bombay and began work as Mohammed Shafi.

## Planting Red Flag At Bombay

Here, like all Communists at that time, he had to undergo severe hardships and privations. He lived with the poorest workers in dirty quarters, worked with them, and jointly with Ranadive, Deshpande, Jambhekar, etc., organised and led them in some of the biggest struggles that this country has known. Often for days he would have to go without food.

Later on, the Party sent him to Ahmedabad. There he worked as a substitute worker under the name of Yusuf. Work was only a pretext to get into the various mills, where he immediately set up secret committees and conducted study circles in Marxism.

Along with Bukhari and others, in the course of a year and a half, he organised 53 big strikes of the Ahmedabad workers and routed Guisarilal Nanda and his associates of the Major Mahajan. They did not dare even to come out before the workers. A powerful trade union movement was founded in Ahmedabad.

In 1934, the Government declared the Communist Party of India illegal and fell on all the workers' and peasants' organisations associated with the Party, with brutal fury. The revolutionary workers' movement in Ahmedabad was ruthlessly suppressed, its leaders like Yusuf and Bukhari thrown into jail. After a number of terms in jail, Yusuf was served with notices to leave Gujerat and the Bombay Presidency.

## Builder Of Cawnpore Mazdur Sabha

He went to Delhi and was again served with a notice to quit. Then he went to Cawnpore, where along with R. D. Bharadwaj, Santosh Chandra Kapoor, Ashok Bose, Sonelal and others, he helped to end the era of betrayal of working class rights by the Congress Socialist careerists, Messrs. Hariharanath and Rajaram Shastri and made the Mazdur Sabha the pride of the textile workers all over the country.

Strong committees, democratically chosen by the workers, sprang up in every mill and branches of the Mazdur Sabha were opened in every important area. In that period, following the Lucknow Congress, which was characterised by an unprecedented mass upsurge, Cawnpore became a model of Congress-Labour united front for all India.

The working class struggle under Yusuf's leadership galvanised the whole province and set a deep stamp of militancy on the Congress and the kisan movements of the province. He himself was a member of the Provincial Congress Committee for seven years, from 1938 to

1945, till he resigned under instructions from the Party.

It would be difficult to count up the number of times Yusuf had to go to jail in these struggles or of the number of big and small strikes he led. The story of the Cawnpore workers' struggles constitutes one of the most glorious chapters in our country's history.

With the declaration of war, repression was again unleashed in the country. In 1940 Yusuf was detained and sent off to Deoli from where he was released in 1942.

Since then he has again been at the head of his team and at his post in Cawnpore toiling day and night in the workers' interests. In spite of the difficulties created by the war, the D.I.R., Section 52 (banning all meetings, etc.) and so on, he succeeded in organising the workers to fight and obtain Dearness Allowance, grain and cloth shops and other smaller facilities in the mills.

## How Is Congress Fighting Him?

The hard and bitter struggles, which Yusuf has had to share with his class, have given him unique experience and steered him into one of the ablest and most ardent champions of our country's cause.

He is an extremely good organiser and one of the most fiery and clear-headed orators the Indian working class has produced. He is held in great esteem and love by the workers, their families, their little kids, and even others who have come in touch with him at Cawnpore.

It is a pity that the Congress leaders in Cawnpore are throwing all their weight in organising a campaign of calumnies and hooliganism to prevent Yusuf's election. Not content with such activities of their own, Cawnpore Congressmen are allying themselves with Royists and irresponsible and disreputable sections to defeat him.

They have broken up his election meetings and attacked dozens of Mazdur Sabha workers; but so far they have not dared to lay their hands on Yusuf, for they know, it would set the Cawnpore workers on fire if they tried to do that.

In spite of all this, there is no doubt that if the workers of Cawnpore were allowed to decide democratically, Yusuf would win with a thumping majority, defeating his Congress rival Shri Rajaram Shastri as he had defeated him in the Mazdur Sabha election in 1938, or in the Congress delegates' election in 1939!

### PEOPLES AGE

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GARHWAL'S TALLEST SON BACK HOME

Election Campaign Among The People

Sixteen years ago, in 1933, the refusal of the Garhwal soldiers to fire on Pathan Satyagrahis at Peshawar put Garhwal for the first time on the national map of India. The leader of those soldiers was TILAK CHANDRA SINGH.

PEOPLE'S agitation saved him from the gallows, but it could not save him from a long and rigorous spell of jail life. From 1933 to 1941, he was in prison. For six years, he was kept in iron-chains, and for another three in solitary confinement. He was released in 1941. His freedom lasted only a few months. In 1942 he was again arrested. Two years later when he was let free, he was served with a notice banning him from entering Garhwal.

Why He Joined Communist Party

At one place, some people asked Chandra Singh why he had joined the Communist Party. Answering them in a public meeting, Chandra Singh declared: "I want to tell you all that the mission of my life remains the same as it was sixteen years ago. It is to unite the Hindus and Muslims of the country to win our country's freedom. You know that in 1930 I had refused to fire on Muslims. Today also I am prepared to lay down my life in the cause of Hindu-Muslim brotherhood. That is why I have joined the Communist Party. My Party stands for national unity."

the young sons of Garhwal have to go down to the plains, to distant Delhi, Bombay or Calcutta, to work as coolies or labourers, or in some lucky cases as clerks and stenographers in the shops or houses of the rich families. Once they leave Garhwal, their earnings in the plains seldom allow them to return to their homes. Their poverty is perpetual.

Of the six lakh population of Garhwal, one lakh are soldiers, retired or active. The first regiment of Garhwalis was constituted in 1857. Since then Garhwal soldiers have proved their mettle in many fields of battle. During the first World War, two Garhwal soldiers and Thakur Debo Singh won the Victoria Cross and all of them the title of "Royal" for their valour. Yet, this is how in their case of 16 years, the British have rewarded them!

Chandra Singh's Pledge To His People

Chandra Singh was deeply moved to see the plight of his countrymen. In one of the meetings held to pay homage to him, he described the poverty, scarcity and helplessness of the people which he had seen and said:

"Whether Garhwalis, who should we suffer this humiliating life? Nature has blessed our country with rich resources. We have got inexhaustible stores of iron, coal, mica, copper and graphite which can be mined with ease. Flooding rivers from the Himalayas can supply electricity for the opening of industries. Thus we shall banish the curse of poverty and ignorance from Garhwal. Every village will vibrate with life and progress. We must all, irrespective of our party or religious affiliations, unite to build a free Garhwal in a free India. I invite you to do this, and dedicate my own life for this cause. He reiterated the pledge, which he had taken on the first day of his entry into Garhwal (Dec. 21, 1945), at Kotdwara and said:

"I am a peasant's son. For sixteen years, I suffered the yoke of British rule. For sixteen years I suffered the 'kazi' (big brass cup) in jail and today, in the presence of all, I take a vow that as long as there is a single drop of tears in my eye, I shall keep on fighting against British imperialism."

For A New And Free Garhwal

This simple-minded pledge of Chandra Singh, widely moved the whole audience. Later, warning against disunity, he said:

"Remember, the war is over. Within a few months, three thirty thousand Garhwal soldiers will be demobilised. Three thousand INA men will be freed. They will return to Garhwal. They will all be uneducated. If we do not help each other and build this nation jointly, no thought of freedom and justice would override us. But if we work together, we can fight and find jobs for all these children of Garhwal and for more. I have some lines with the permission of my party, to construct a new and free Garhwal. Let us all put our shoulders to the wheel." Twenty-four hundred of the three thousand Garhwal INA men are still in jail. Twenty, where Chandra Singh was, are making a fervent appeal for funds to secure their release. In the first meeting given to him in Garhwal, on Dec. 31, at Kotdwara, he said:

"I cannot like this welcome. So long as the INA men are behind the bars, how can I feel happy or know rest!" In every meeting he addressed, he raised funds for the Defence of the INA soldiers and sent the sum to the Central INA Office at Delhi.

For The INA Men: Help In Deeds, Not In Words

Unfortunately, some of the released INA men, who have returned to Garhwal, are being used by groups of Congressmen in party squabbles and in disreputable election propaganda. Chandra Singh made a moving appeal to Congressmen not to make the INA men "tools of election propaganda and then sell the chances of much greater things which they can do for the people of Garhwal."

Welcomed By All Sections Of People

Chandra Singh's appeals have made a deep mark everywhere. He has created a new consciousness and a new vision of hope among the people of poverty-ridden Garhwal. For years the Garhwalis have been suffering from acute scarcity of food, cloth, kerosene and other necessities of life. The Congress officials, under an English Deputy Commissioner, who himself is a big landlord of Bhanwar Kotwali and has now started a motor company also, have played havoc with them. Against this background, when the people heard the message of Chandra Singh and realised its practical workability, their hearts brightened, and they rallied round his message, their support for his increasing a hundred fold. In the beginning, Congressmen also welcomed Chandra Singh's suggestions and several of them were welcome. Sri Kripavan Sharma, "Madhu" (President of the Garhwal Congress Committee), Thakur Prasad Singh, Sri. Bhakta Dardar,

and neither Chandra Singh nor any of the INA men was allowed to speak. After a few election speeches, the meeting was suddenly terminated! Later on, at the same place, a much larger crowd gathered to hear Veer Chandra Singh. Chandra Singh declared the partisanship displayed in the previous meeting, and amidst loud applause declared: "We temporary and petty partisans side bet as not touch the healthy atmosphere of Garhwal."

Offered Congress Ticket: Will Only Stand As Communist

On January 4th and 5th, the Garhwal Congress Committee was meeting at Brimbar to select candidates for the coming provincial elections. Before the meeting about all the local Congress leaders went to Thakur Chandra Singh and requested that he should contest the election on the Congress ticket. Chandra Singh told them that that could not be, as he is a member of the Communist Party.

Slender Campaign

When they found that Chandra Singh was not prepared to contest his party, the attitude of the Congressmen changed towards him. Against the pleas of Garhwal and his party, a wife-slender campaign was set on foot. The Congressmen did not offer him the Congress ticket the previous week. On the 4th of January, Veer Chandra Singh was requested to speak in the meeting. It was announced that Veer Chandra Singh would speak in the meeting. INA men also were present and were seated on the dais.

U. P. Communist Candidate, Gajadhar Singh

Builder Of Congress In Aligarh

Aligarh Congress occupies a very important place in the political life of the U.P. From 1901 it has been the base of a strong kisan and Congress movement. In the thirties, when a new kisan awakening took place under the leadership of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in the eastern districts of the U.P., Aligarh took up the challenge in western U.P., and launched a powerful "Adha Legua" or "Half-Herd" movement.

Father Of Aligarh Congress

Manmohini Prasad Saxena, the founder of the Congress in the Ben-Gan operation Movement in 1901 and organizer in Aligarh. To be able to give the public attention to Congress work, he resigned his job. He was a teacher in a school. When he continued his work, which he had inherited from his father, the condition of his family became bad and he had to give some time to the diling of his school.

Helping Congressmen Into Communist Party

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10,000 IN THREE WEEKS

Not Fast Enough: Rs. 73,000

Damage To The Press

THIS week too money has come in faster than in the last two weeks, but not yet fast enough. About Rs. 10,000 is the total in the three weeks since our press was attacked, but Rs. 73,000 is our loss (see box on page 10 of the current issue), we have yet a considerable way to make up.

1 Lacs So Far

The outstanding donation of this week was Rs. 31 given personally to Jagan when he was in Chitragpur. The donor was the widowed mother of our young Chitragpur Party artist, Ramnath Singh. She was well-off, her husband was a flourishing engineer. But after his death and the untimely death of her son, she was left with two children. Today the family is just managing to make the ends meet. Ramnath is a whole-time worker in the Party, his brother is unemployed.

Outstanding This Week

From all over India, from every province, every class. I will give the detailed figures in our issue of March 1946—and I want all those Provinces who have sent me no figures, if they do not send them, to contribute their mite to the fund. Their mite will appear in a black-and-white list in the Party, and will be used to help the poor and needy people by not informing them just how much they have given us.

Party Unites Too

From our Party units too much has come this week. Ramnath (Bihar) has sent Rs. 115 in addition to Rs. 350 already sent. Nanda (Bihar) continues to send Rs. 100 in a first instalment—his 27-10 of which he has already collected from Meena. Broda (Bihar) has sent in Rs. 40. Our comrades in the Kumaon State Railway units at Sonbhadra have sent us Rs. 11, collected from a number of workers in the press.

Support Him

This is the second week since we have had news from the Communist Party in Bihar. The Bihar Party has sent us Rs. 100 in a first instalment—his 27-10 of which he has already collected from Meena. Broda (Bihar) has sent in Rs. 40. Our comrades in the Kumaon State Railway units at Sonbhadra have sent us Rs. 11, collected from a number of workers in the press.

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The attacks on our headquarters have however roused them, they have sent Rs. 300, and in addition—the brother has collected Rs. 107 from his friends and made ten subscriptions for People's Age.

Another young officer—also a soldier—has sent Rs. 200, a student—Rs. 20; Indians from Ranchi, Kanpur, and an ordinance depot have the contribution in kind—both British and Indians have subscribed; and from abroad, when our work has reached us in addition to an individual donation from an I.A.V. officer of Rs. 100.

Our struggle goes to them for their sympathy, support in our struggle for we know that their life is hard, their pay high.

Be A Party Didi!

Another donation is from the sister of the I.A.V. comrade who sent us Rs. 100 as soon as he heard of our loss. We have known this sister as a good didi to her younger brothers and sisters, but now she has looked upon them—most of them are other members or sympathisers of our Party—in a different light.

Be A Party Didi!

The events of the last six months have however roused her. She has sent two gifts a hundred—worth Rs. 200 for our fund. We hope this is only the beginning of her transformation from a good didi to a good Party didi. There are two other notable individual donations this week. One from Mrs. D. D. Wadia of Rs. 300 in addition to the Rs. 100 she has sent us in the past. The second, of Rs. 100, from Mrs. P. P. Sharma, a former editor of the Indian Express who is going to bring out a new English weekly, 'Swastika'. We write:

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Warm Reception

The news of his impending return spread throughout the district. On December 21, 1945, when the train took him to Kotdwara, the railroad for Garhwal, huge crowds greeted him. A great welcome was given to him in a public meeting when all citizens. Everybody said that he had made the same of Garhwal in spirit as Dr. B. R. Ambedkar had done in the eyes of Indians and of the whole world. Kitchens were set up for the people. Everybody touched his feet. Chandra Singh himself was overwhelmed with emotion.

Garhwalis Under British Imperialism

Shaped like a broken sword-point from end to end and the length of Garhwal is 120 miles, breadth 60, and the total area 5471 sq. miles. Only about one-tenth of this territory, i.e. an area of 547 sq. miles, is irrigated; the rest is un-irrigated and mostly unproductive. Formerly there were fifty-two 'Gadris' or 'Gadris' in Garhwal, where independent Gadris ruled. These were conquered and united into one kingdom by the rulers of the Path Kingdom. Later in 1803, the British annexed Garhwal to their territory. In 1914, the 'imperialist British helped' the Garhwalis to throw off the British yoke. Since then Garhwal has been a part of British India.

Why He Joined Communist Party

At one place, some people asked Chandra Singh why he had joined the Communist Party. Answering them in a public meeting, Chandra Singh declared: "I want to tell you all that the mission of my life remains the same as it was sixteen years ago. It is to unite the Hindus and Muslims of the country to win our country's freedom. You know that in 1930 I had refused to fire on Muslims. Today also I am prepared to lay down my life in the cause of Hindu-Muslim brotherhood. That is why I have joined the Communist Party. My Party stands for national unity."

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"Remember, the war is over. Within a few months, three thirty thousand Garhwal soldiers will be demobilised. Three thousand INA men will be freed. They will return to Garhwal. They will all be uneducated. If we do not help each other and build this nation jointly, no thought of freedom and justice would override us. But if we work together, we can fight and find jobs for all these children of Garhwal and for more. I have some lines with the permission of my party, to construct a new and free Garhwal. Let us all put our shoulders to the wheel."

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Twenty-four hundred of the three thousand Garhwal INA men are still in jail. Twenty, where Chandra Singh was, are making a fervent appeal for funds to secure their release. In the first meeting given to him in Garhwal, on Dec. 31, at Kotdwara, he said:

Welcomed By All Sections Of People

Chandra Singh's appeals have made a deep mark everywhere. He has created a new consciousness and a new vision of hope among the people of poverty-ridden Garhwal. For years the Garhwalis have been suffering from acute scarcity of food, cloth, kerosene and other necessities of life. The Congress officials, under an English Deputy Commissioner, who himself is a big landlord of Bhanwar Kotwali and has now started a motor company also, have played havoc with them. Against this background, when the people heard the message of Chandra Singh and realised its practical workability, their hearts brightened, and they rallied round his message, their support for his increasing a hundred fold. In the beginning, Congressmen also welcomed Chandra Singh's suggestions and several of them were welcome. Sri Kripavan Sharma, "Madhu" (President of the Garhwal Congress Committee), Thakur Prasad Singh, Sri. Bhakta Dardar,

U. P. Communist Candidate, Gajadhar Singh

Builder Of Congress In Aligarh

Aligarh Congress occupies a very important place in the political life of the U.P. From 1901 it has been the base of a strong kisan and Congress movement. In the thirties, when a new kisan awakening took place under the leadership of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in the eastern districts of the U.P., Aligarh took up the challenge in western U.P., and launched a powerful "Adha Legua" or "Half-Herd" movement.

Father Of Aligarh Congress

Manmohini Prasad Saxena, the founder of the Congress in the Ben-Gan operation Movement in 1901 and organizer in Aligarh. To be able to give the public attention to Congress work, he resigned his job. He was a teacher in a school. When he continued his work, which he had inherited from his father, the condition of his family became bad and he had to give some time to the diling of his school.

In 1933, when he was released after completing a term of

Offered Congress Ticket: Will Only Stand As Communist

On January 4th and 5th, the Garhwal Congress Committee was meeting at Brimbar to select candidates for the coming provincial elections. Before the meeting about all the local Congress leaders went to Thakur Chandra Singh and requested that he should contest the election on the Congress ticket. Chandra Singh told them that that could not be, as he is a member of the Communist Party.

Slender Campaign

When they found that Chandra Singh was not prepared to contest his party, the attitude of the Congressmen changed towards him. Against the pleas of Garhwal and his party, a wife-slender campaign was set on foot. The Congressmen did not offer him the Congress ticket the previous week. On the 4th of January, Veer Chandra Singh was requested to speak in the meeting. It was announced that Veer Chandra Singh would speak in the meeting. INA men also were present and were seated on the dais.

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10,000 IN THREE WEEKS

Not Fast Enough: Rs. 73,000

Damage To The Press

THIS week too money has come in faster than in the last two weeks, but not yet fast enough. About Rs. 10,000 is the total in the three weeks since our press was attacked, but Rs. 73,000 is our loss (see box on page 10 of the current issue), we have yet a considerable way to make up.

1 Lacs So Far

The outstanding donation of this week was Rs. 31 given personally to Jagan when he was in Chitragpur. The donor was the widowed mother of our young Chitragpur Party artist, Ramnath Singh. She was well-off, her husband was a flourishing engineer. But after his death and the untimely death of her son, she was left with two children. Today the family is just managing to make the ends meet. Ramnath is a whole-time worker in the Party, his brother is unemployed.

Outstanding This Week

From all over India, from every province, every class. I will give the detailed figures in our issue of March 1946—and I want all those Provinces who have sent me no figures, if they do not send them, to contribute their mite to the fund. Their mite will appear in a black-and-white list in the Party, and will be used to help the poor and needy people by not informing them just how much they have given us.

Party Unites Too

From our Party units too much has come this week. Ramnath (Bihar) has sent Rs. 115 in addition to Rs. 350 already sent. Nanda (Bihar) continues to send Rs. 100 in a first instalment—his 27-10 of which he has already collected from Meena. Broda (Bihar) has sent in Rs. 40. Our comrades in the Kumaon State Railway units at Sonbhadra have sent us Rs. 11, collected from a number of workers in the press.

Support Him

This is the second week since we have had news from the Communist Party in Bihar. The Bihar Party has sent us Rs. 100 in a first instalment—his 27-10 of which he has already collected from Meena.

Whose Victory in Assam Tea-Garden Labour Seats ?

# Congress Leaders' Pact With European Planters

## Communists' United Front Offer Rejected

WHEN I interviewed Biswanath Mukherji (Communist Central Committee organiser for Assam) in Calcutta, I put to him a straight question which is on every lip: 'Why were the Communists defeated so badly in the Assam labour seats and why did we contest at all?'

I got a very frank reply, the gist of which is this:

"We entered the elections to fight the British tea planters who are the real rulers of Assam. Assam tea garden labour is the most oppressed in all India. They have to live and work in the private kingdoms of the tea kings. If they want to assert their rights they have to rise in revolt against the whole order of things—staking not only their jobs, but their homes and their lives.

"We have been associated with the beginnings of the tea garden labour movement, which was destroyed in war-time repression. We thought it was our duty to make the election-battle the starting point for a new revolt of tea garden labour.

"We had reasons to believe that the Congress—which had nothing to do with tea garden labour in the past—would not contest the elections here and at least leave the field clear for a straight fight between the planters' nominees and the Communists.

"And we never expected a complete tie-up between the British planters and the Congress.

"But in fact there was a pact between the planters and the Congress. There were no elections at all. Instead, there was a locking out of Communist candidates and agitators from the plantations and a locking up of labour inside the plantation kingdoms. There was not a shred of secrecy in the voting and there was an open black-listing of those who might vote Communist.

"We did not expect the Congress to go to such lengths to back the planters' nominees wearing the Congress label. We know that, 'the enemy of our enemy is our friend' is the Congress motto and the Communists today are its enemy No. 1. But we had illusions that this motto would not lead to a straight alliance with the British planters too.

"That was a terrible mistake and not only we but many others—including anti-British Congressmen—will no doubt learn the lesson."

After that, Biswanath gave me the full story of the election.

### Steel Frame Of British Imperialism

The British Imperialist grip over Assam is based far more on the British plantations than on the I.C.S.

Only about one-third (400 out of 1128) of the Assam tea plantations are owned by Indians—the rest are in British hands. Even the few Indian plantations (many of which are owned by Congressmen like Sjt. Prafulla Barua of the Sibesgar Congress Committee) are small-scale plantations, so that only one-sixth of the total acreage is in Indian hands, producing one-tenth of the total tea output. The British planters boss the show and the Indians are completely under their thumbs.

These tea plantations, in fact, are a huge kingdom whose budget is bigger than that of the Assam Government itself. Their total annual profits add up to Rs. 8 crores—as against Rs. 3 crore annual revenue of the Assam Government.

Apart from their economic domination, the balance of political power is also in their hands in Assam. The existing Constitution guaranteed to them nine

out of a total of 108 seats in the Assembly. In the political set-up that has existed in the Assam Assembly in the last ten years, the balance of power lay with them.

One example is enough to bear this out. During the days of the Congress Ministry before the war, a Congress M.L.A., Sjt. Amiya Das, introduced a Bill merely demanding a public enquiry into labour conditions in the plantations which are a well-known scandal. But he was forced to withdraw the Bill on orders from Sardar Patel. The Congress High Command did not want to precipitate a 'crisis' by provoking the British planters.

### Private Kingdoms Of White Bosses

The backbone of the British bosses' strength is the chain of plantations all over Assam Valley, where they are "the lords of creation." There, tens of thousands of plantation workers and their families are their slaves and subjects.

## Offensive, With Police Aid, Against Workers Makes Farce Of Elections

"They work for wages varying from two to five annas a day.

"They live in hovels owned by the planters and policed by the plantation sardars.

"They buy their daily necessities from shop-keepers who are the playthings of the planters and their managers and clerks.

"They travel along metalled roads built by the planters and on buses owned by the planters or their associates.

"The police and Government officials wise and dine with the planters or their managers.

What adds to their helplessness is that the bulk of tea garden labour are foreigners, who know nothing of Assam except the White Gods in whose kingdoms they were born and where they live, toil and die like slaves. Most of them are Oriyas, Biharis or from the U.P.—uprooted from their native soil a generation ago—strangers to their own people and also to Assam.

### Workers Need Death-Defying Courage

In such conditions, the tea garden worker needs death-defying courage to fight for the smallest right. He has shown such courage in the past, when goaded to the point of madness after years of unspeakable oppression.

In the 1920's, plantation labour rose for the first time, inspired by the railway strike in East Bengal and Assam. Then, it happened again in the late 'thirties, in the days of the Congress Ministry. In both cases, it was more of a revolt sweeping entire plantations than a labour movement of the type we know elsewhere in India. Whole settlements were on the march to smash the old order and to build a new world and the stakes were liberty or death.

This awakening in the 'thirties brought the beginning of an organised trade union movement. The peak was reached when there was a bye-election to one of the tea-garden labour

seats in Cachar, early in 1940. In the 1936 general elections, all the labour seats had been captured by the planters' nominees without much of a contest. But in the 1940 bye-election, for the first time, Sanat Ahir, put up by the Communists and backed by the Congress, defeated the planters' man.

After that, in the war-time ordinance raj, the young trade union movement was practically smashed everywhere. Tea garden leaders like Benoy Chakravarty, Haridas Bhattacharya and others were interned, arrested or expelled from Assam Valley. But that bye-election remained a great landmark for tea garden workers.

### Why We Stood For Elections

In the present elections, we wanted to make the fight for the labour seats the starting-point for a new attack on the planters' raj and for the revival of the tea-garden labour movement.

We expected the British planters to put up their own nominees and thought it was our moral duty to fight them. The Congress did not seem keen on contesting the seats till the very last. Sjt. Bardoloi had himself told us that the Congress would not contest the labour seats.

We got ready to fight the planters' nominees alone, but made an offer to

Then began the Congress campaign which showed how thoroughly unprincipled its leaders could be in their propaganda, how brutal in their methods.

All tea garden labour is Hindu and the main propaganda was anti-Muslim. "The Red Flag," it was said, "is the flag of the Muslims—dyed in the blood of slaughtered cows." Communist agitators were attacked as habitual beef eaters. The Communists, they said, want to establish Muslim raj, the Congress fights for Hindu raj. "Jai Hind" it was said, really means "Jai Hindus". The Tricolour was passed off as the colours of the Hindu Trinity—Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva.

Maulana Azad's portrait exhibited at Congress rallies was removed on more than one occasion so as not to 'confuse' the voters with a 'Muslim face' on the Congress platform!

Then there was a terrific barrage in the name of Gandhiji—who alone is known among the workers. "Gandhiji has formed his Government," it was said, "and will give you everything, if you give him your vote." "Throw away your spade, Gandhiji has sent us an elephant now"—was said by many who were canvassing for the Communists. The reference was to the signs on the ballot boxes—the spade for the Communist box and the elephant for the Congress.

### Gangsterism And Police Aid

Side by side with this, there was an almost complete chocking-off of the Communist election campaign.

Attacks on the Communists and their meetings were many. In Kalighat tea garden in Sreemangal, Haridas Bhattacharya was personally attacked by

the Provincial Congress Committee (P.C.C.) to divide up the labour seats between the Congress and Communist candidates—and give a straight fight to the planters in each case.

We did not know at that time that the tea kings' organisation, the Indian Tea Association (ITA), was getting new plans ready to buy up the future of Assam as they had owned her in the past. We did know that one British planter was standing for elections on the Congress ticket.

But we did not dream at that time that there was going to be a pact between them—with the planters backing the Congress nominees in the labour seats in return for a 'cease fire' from the Congress side against the planters' exploitation of the wealth of Assam.

We came to know later that the biggest Marwari professor in Assam, Himmatnagar, was the go-between between the planters and the Congress. He made lakhs by supplying beef to the army during the war and at the same time paid fat donations to the Congress funds. Despite universal opposition, even inside the Congress, he was given the Congress ticket for the Commerce and Industries seat by Sardar Patel because he undertook to 'capture' the labour seats for the Congress.

The terrible truth did not dawn on us till the day for the filing of the nomination papers. On that day, the P.C.C. at last sent a reply to our offer for a united front against the planters, saying curtly that they were putting up Congress candidates for all the seats.

About the same time, we also heard that the planters were telling the people that they would support the Congress candidates in the labour seats.

So the election set-up now was that the Communists were opposing the Congress candidates in three out of four seats and the Congress fighting the Royists for the remaining seat (Tezpur).

### Poison Unlimited: Gandhiji's Name Misused

After that, hell broke loose. It started off with Pandit Nehru's election tour in Assam, in mid-December. In all his speeches, there was not a word against the British planters. He went to all the constituencies where the Communists were contesting, made bitter attacks on the Communists calling them anti-national and agents of the Muslim League. But he did not go to Tezpur and closed up by dining with the British planters.

The planters, too, responded very well by declaring holidays in their gardens to send labour to his meetings and some of them attended them in person.

### Communists Poll

47 per cent of Congress Candidates

--3 General Seats ★

THE Nationalist papers have given everybody the impression that all the Communist candidates in Assam have not only been defeated but forfeited their security deposits. The Hindusthan Standard and the Ananda Bazar Patrika of Calcutta have beaten others hollow by reporting that seven Communist candidates lost their deposits—although the fact is that we contested only six seats in ASSAM!

The truth is that we stood for three general and three labour seats, in the labour seats we did lose our deposits—we explain why, elsewhere on this page.

Elections in any real sense of the word took place only in the three general seats. And there, the three Communist candidates (one of whom, Inayat Singh, was defeated by a very narrow margin) together polled about 20,000 or about half the total Congress poll. Not one lost his deposit.

And this was achieved despite the fact that these three constituencies are middle-class Congress bases and our main strength here is in the khans, only a very small proportion of whom are eligible to vote.

It was achieved despite the concentration of the maximum propaganda strength of the Congress in these seats—from Pandit Nehru downwards. Pandit Nehru had attacked the Communists as being anti-national, agents of the Muslim League and ridiculed them as 'cheeky' children who dare to stand up against the 60-year-old Congress.

And yet the results show that nearly half the voters emphatically disagree with Pandit Nehru and will probably be damned as 'anti-national' by him.

This is the first time the Communist Party contested general seats and did it in the worst possible conditions. We are proud of the results.

Here are the correct election results:

	Communist	Congress
Cachar Central	13,357	17,548
West Karimganj	3,051	7,849
Sunamganj	3,350	17,226

ria, had conducted strikes in support of Communist candidates very early in the election campaign. They were classified as 'uncertain' voters and everything was done to keep them off the booths on the polling day.

In Tinsukia gardens, for instance, at least 700 workers from one group of plantations alone were kept back on 'special duty'. In other cases trucks would not carry them and they were not let off in time to walk the distance to the booths. Several plantation managers were desperate enough to break down bridges over hill streams to stop any movement of the Communists! Meanwhile, whole batches of workers came and told us with tears in their eyes:

"We want to vote for you. You are the right sort and you fight for our rights. But everybody in the world is against you—the sahibs, the babus, the police and the Congress. If we vote for you, we lose our jobs, our homes and belongings, everything tomorrow. We won't vote this time."

That is why, taken as a whole, polling was poor. Only 2,500 voters out of the 12,000 eligible to vote in Tinsukia, for instance, actually cast their votes, 10,000 if not more, could have voted. Workers live in compact settlements in the plantations and if some took the initiative, all should have voted. But they did not go or were not allowed to.

### Conclusion

This is the real story of the Assam labour elections. The fact that the British planters and not the Congress have won hands down is damning on all who saw or did anything in this election fight. The best eye-opener is the bad defeat for the Congress candidate in the fourth seat Nazira, at the hands of the planters' nominee there, the Royist, Sheryan.

Congressmen and middle-class folk have come and told the Communists that they can only hang their heads in shame at this supreme disgrace for the Congress.

Sjt. Satiyakan, a Gashati Congressman and Hindi Pracharak, has related to us how shame-faced Sjt. Bardoloi is at the way the elections were conducted on the Congress side.

Students who went to defend the 'prestige' of the Congress—so they thought—have come back stunned because they were asked not to 'displease the British planters by shouting anti-imperialist slogans and were asked to tell the workers that Gandhiji has already won Swaraaj and the sahibs do not oppose it any longer.

So great has been the reaction, in fact, that in Sreemangal, where we suffered the biggest defeat, an Oriya Communist agitator was asked by local Congressmen to speak on their Subhas Day meeting.

We have been badly beaten this time. But we shall not rest till the flag of freedom and elementary social justice is planted again in the Assam tea plantations. Our eyes are wide open now—and tea labour and very many Congressmen too are wide awake. We shall see how long the anti-British Congressmen of Assam swallow the terrible lie that the Imperialist planters have turned friends of Indian freedom.

by Arif Bose