

Revolutionary Age

An Organ of Marxism-Leninism in the United States

For Communist Unity in the Revolutionary Class Struggle

VOLUME I.
NUMBER 7.

Issued by
Communist Party U. S. A. - Majority Group

FEB. 1, 1930.
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India in Revolution

On the Significance of the Recent Indian National Congress

THE political situation in India is developing towards a revolutionary crisis; the process, however, is very complicated. This is due to the extremely complicated character of class relations. A process of class differentiation is the characteristic feature of the present situation. The nationalist movement is splitting up into two distinct fractions—one advancing, still rather blindly, toward revolution, while the other is eager to make a united front with British imperialism in face of the danger of maturing revolution. As between native capitalism and the toiling masses there is still another factor in the Indian nationalist movement. Under the given conditions of the country the urban petty bourgeoisie play a very important role. It is a fact that hitherto they have monopolized the leadership of the radical section of the entire movement, including the working class. There are numbers of examples of this.

In the earlier stages of the colonial revolution the petty bourgeois nationalists are bound to move to the left, for the conditions of political oppression and economic bankruptcy, under which they live, cannot be appreciably improved thru any possible compromise with foreign imperialism and native reaction. In the last few years the radicalization of the petty bourgeoisie (particularly intellectuals) has gone on simultaneously with the growing revolutionary activity of the toiling masses. The outcome of the latest annual session of the National Congress, held during the last week of December, shows that the leftward movement of the petty bourgeoisie has gone to the extent of an open revolt against the policy of Indian capitalism seeking a compromise with British imperialism. The inevitable consequence of this fateful step taken by the petty bourgeoisie will be that they will move close to the toiling masses—a *revolutionary democratic alliance*, which under present Indian conditions will embrace well over 80 percent of the population, will be formed. This very clearly is a perspective of a revolutionary crisis pregnant with the possibilities of further development. But the process must proceed in stages.

While the growing activity of the masses is undoubtedly the predominating factor of the situation, the intervention of British imperialism, operating thru the Labor Government, has

been the immediate cause of sharpening the situation. Two years ago the British Parliament set up the so-called Simon Commission to examine and report on what "further measures of self government might be granted to India." The Commission was purely British, without a single Indian on it. On this ground it was boycotted not only by the petty bourgeois National

Congress but also by a considerable section of the right wing (big bourgeois) nationalists. To insure the imposition of the Simon Report upon India in the teeth of the opposition of the National Congress it was necessary that the united front, based on the slogan of boycotting the Simon Commission, be broken—that is, that the big bourgeoisie be won over to accept the recommendations of the Simon Commission. This was not difficult. A generous gesture on the part of imperialism was all that was necessary to detach the big bourgeoisie from the half-hearted alliance with forces liable to be inflamed any moment. Acting under the instructions of the Labor Government, the Viceroy

WE call particular attention to the article on the recent Indian Congress that appears on this page. Comrade Manabendra Nath Roy is well competent to discuss the important questions of the Indian Revolution. From his earliest youth he has been associated with the revolutionary movement. After arrest in connection with an attempted insurrection (as a result of which he was condemned to death), Comrade Roy escaped and travelled over the Orient (China, Japan, Philippines, etc). During the war he came to America, then went to Mexico where he organized the C. P. of Mexico, whose first secretary he became. He then proceeded to Moscow, took active part in the II Congress (1920), cooperating with Lenin on the colonial thesis. He soon became the responsible leader in the Ecce for work in the Far East, and in 1927, during the highest point of the Chinese revolution, was Comintern representative there. For a time he was also head of the Anglo-American Secretariat of the Ecce.

Comrade Roy was recently "expelled" from the Communist International by the present leaders because of his uncompromising stand in the struggle against the false line of the Ecce.

two months ago made an official declaration that the policy of the British government was to grant Indian Dominion Status (full "self-government" within the British Empire) and that, on the publication of the report of the Simon Commission, representatives of Indian nationalism would be invited to a Conference with the British government in London for definitely deciding the political future of India. The gesture was even more effective than British imperialism expected. Not only the right wing nationalist leaders, who had boycotted the Simon Commission, but even all the outstanding leaders of petty bourgeois National Congress enthusiastically welcomed the Viceroy's declaration, and expressed their readiness to attend the promised conference. This precipitated a severe crisis inside the National Congress.

In 1927, in resolving to boycott the Simon Commission the National Congress had declared its goal to be the attainment of complete independence. Last year the right wing leaders induced the Congress to shelve the Independence Resolution of the year before, and agree to accept Dominion Status. But Gandhi, who has always acted as the agent of the big bourgeoisie, could retain his hold upon his petty bourgeois following only thru the demagoguery of giving an "ultimatum" to the British govern-

ment. The Congress resolved to "accept" Dominion Status, provided it would be granted before the end of the year 1929. The manifesto of the nationalist leaders in response to the Declaration of the Viceroy exposed this sham "ultimatum". The Viceroy did not concede to the demands of the National Congress. The joint conference was fixed for the middle of 1930 and there was no definite promise that even then Dominion Status would be granted. Still the leaders of the National Congress, including Gandhi, who the year before had deceived his naive petty bourgeois following with the sham "ultimatum", capitulated. This act of the leaders created consternation in the ranks of the National Congress, which repudiated the leaders, and threatened to rise in open revolt against them. But the tactical move of imperialism was successful in placing the buffer section of the nationalist movement in a very delicate position. Leaders like Gandhi, and the elder Nehru, who had for years kept the petty bourgeois nationalists away from the revolutionary path, could no longer sit on the fence. They had to fall one way or the other.

After making frantic efforts to secure some definite promise from imperialism at the eleventh hour, which might possibly enable them to keep the National Congress on the futile path of reformism, they decided that surface radicalism was the most convenient way out of the impasse. Reluctantly, they swam the rising tide of revolution hoping that, as long as they retained the leadership of the movement, they could again switch it off in the direction of reformism. And the situation in India provides a basis for their hope, altho just at the moment it appears forlorn. *The development of the revolution will be greatly influenced, one way or the other, by the action of the proletariat—by the tactics of the Communist Party.*

Neither the attitude of the leaders nor the resolution of the Congress, however, is the true standard for judging the potentialities of the situation. Judged simply by the resolution adopted by the Congress, the perspectives would not appear to be very encouraging. The main resolution sponsored by Gandhi contains four points: 1. Complete independence as definitely the goal of the National Congress; 2. refusal to attend the coming conference with the British government in London; 3. boycott of the existing legislative bodies; and 4. organization of a movement for the non-payment of taxes. On the face of it, the resolution is very radical; but as a matter of fact it is entirely different. The first point, which has caused so much commotion thruout the world, is a simple expression of desire, and will remain no more, as long as the nationalist movement is without a program of action for realizing its goal. The second point is a mere negative attitude and even then, it is qualified with the proviso "under present circumstances". The third is the only categorically defined clause of the resolution and it calls for an action which has proved to be such a fiasco in the past. The last point, which has the most formidable appearance, is admittedly not for immediate application. The Executive Committee of the Congress is authorized to take action on this line "whenever and wherever necessary." Consequently, the adoption of this resolution does not, for practical purposes, change the course of the nationalist movement. To compensate for the apparent step forward the door is left wide open for retreat.

There are other signs indicating the revolutionary potentiality of the situation. The deceptive resolution of Gandhi was opposed from both sides—the right as well as the left. A more radical resolution for an immediate start of the no-tax campaign, the declaration of general strike and the *establishment of a parallel government* was rejected in the Congress Committee by a very small majority! Had it been placed before the plenary session, it would surely have been carried with a huge majority. In contrast to this, Gandhi's resolution was adopted in the Committee by a very small majority and the plenary ses-

sion passed it as a mere formality. But the opposition was so powerful that Gandhi had to stake his political life to carry the Congress. He threatened to resign, should the Congress adopt any resolution which would imply a departure from the principle of non-violence. On this very vital point he was defeated. The huge demonstrations, which accompanied the meetings of the Congress, rang with the cry: "*Long Live the Revolution!*" This is unprecedented in the entire history of the National Congress, to which the very idea of revolution had always been foreign and taboo. The most active elements in the nationalist movement are beginning to grasp that they are involved in a struggle the object of which is more far-reaching than national independence—a struggle for a radical readjustment of the inner life of the nation, in which the overthrow of the foreign domination is just the beginning.

This deep leftward swing of the petty bourgeoisie has quickened the process of class-differentiation. The Liberal Federation representing the big bourgeoisie, passed a resolution condemning the "revolutionary politics" of the Congress. Its president, a mill owner of Bombay, stated in his speech that it would be the duty of the government to suppress any attempt to put the resolution of the Congress into practice and that all having a "stake in the country" should support the government in maintaining law and order. On the other hand, the right wing of the National Congress, which opposed the resolution of Gandhi, has broken away. So, there has come into existence a solid bourgeois bloc with the declared object of joining hands with British imperialism against the radical nationalism of the Congress under the banner of which stand the big petty bourgeois masses.

Inside the Congress itself there are elements who strive to burst the bonds of the deceptive resolution of Gandhi; they appear to be strong numerically. The measures advocated by them—establishment of a parallel government, General strike, immediate non-payment of taxes—are under given conditions somewhat romantic. To organize political mass strikes is, at the present time, an effective means for developing the struggle, but a real mass political general strike only comes as the prelude to an armed insurrection, for which political, organizational and technical preparations have still to be made. Moreover, it is a petty bourgeois illusion to talk of a parallel government before the armed insurrection. Nevertheless, the masses who support such drastic measures show their readiness for a revolutionary struggle. The necessity of the moment is to provide them with a program of *National Democratic Revolution* and lead them by stages in the struggle for the realization of that program.

M. N. ROY.

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THE DATE	Saturday Night, February 1, 1930.
THE PLACE	NEW HARLEM CASINO 100 W. 116St., near Lenox Ave.
THE EVENT	The RED BANQUET for the WEEKLY REVOLUTIONARY AGE.
THE PROGRAM	PROLETARIAN VAUDEVILLE Negro Folk Songs A Startling Concert Program Speakers
THE PRICE	FIFTY CENTS — that's all! GET YOUR TICKET EARLY!

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