

India and the Second International

"We have complete confidence in the MacDonald government"

By V. CHATTOPADHYAYA

THE great imperialist war rendered at least one service to the working class and to the colonial peoples. It ruthlessly tore off the mask that had been worn for decades by the social democrats and clearly revealed the fact that beneath the strong language and revolutionary phraseology which they adopted at their International Congresses they were steadily drifting towards becoming the supporters and administrators of the interests of the imperialist States.

The culmination has now been reached by the leaders of the Second International at the session of the Executive held in Berlin on May 11-12, and the resolution passed on India and the so-called appeal to the workers of Russia have shown them up even to their own rank-and-file once for all as the lackeys of the imperialist exploiters and the agents and abettors of imperialist war.

In order to understand their gradual transformation from social democratic phraseology to social imperialist action, it is necessary to go back to the treatment of the Colonial question by the leaders of the Second International during the last forty years.

There are three distinct periods observable in this development. The resolutions passed by the Second International at its Congresses before the war, although often couched in militant language were merely of an academic character and did not bind its members to any definite action for the liberation of the colonial people. As far back as 1891 the social democrat, H. M. Hyndman, took up the Indian question at the Socialist Congress where he and an Indian called Sanyal, denounced in unmeasured terms the British exploitation of India.

Hyndman wrote and published innumerable articles against British rule, denouncing it as a system of brigandage, and he always advised Indians to throw their imperialist exploiters out bag and baggage. But the same

anti-imperialist Socialist Hyndman became one of the principal advocates of a big British Navy a few years before the outbreak of the World War.

At the Socialist Congress at Paris (September 23-27, 1900) the Dutchman Van Kol introduced a resolution on the colonial question which received the full support of the English delegation consisting of Hyndman, Quelch and Curran. It will be noted here that what Van Kol denounced was a capitalist colonial policy, the thesis was being developed that there was such a thing possible as a socialist colonial policy with a civilizing mission.

We see the beginnings of this development at the session of the International Socialist Congress held on August 17, 1904, at Amsterdam, where there was a special resolution which ended by inviting the workers of Great Britain to compel their government to abandon its infamous and dishonorable colonial system, and to grant to India an autonomous government under British supremacy.

The next development with regard to the colonial question took place at the international congress at Stuttgart (August 18 to 25, 1907) where Ramsay MacDonald played an important part in the discussion on the possibilities of a civilizing colonial policy under a Socialist regime. The English delegation including Ramsay MacDonald presented the following resolution with regard to the British rule in India:

"Considering that it is in accordance with the ideal of a true social order that no people should be subjected to a despotic or tyrannical form of government, the Congress expresses its conviction that the maintenance of British rule in India is a real misfortune for India and is opposed in the highest degree to the best interests of that country, and it declares

it to be the duty of all friends of freedom in the whole world to advance the movement which has for its aim the liberation of the inhabitants of the unhappy land constituting one-fifth of the human race."

But this resolution on India was not voted upon because it had not been previously presented to the International Bureau. The President, however, declared that the tendency of this resolution was accepted both by the Bureau and by the Congress.

But the same Ramsay MacDonald voted at Stuttgart for the resolution on the colonial question which had been submitted by the majority of the Colonial Question which began thus:

"This Congress declares that the value or necessity of colonies in general — especially for the working class—has been strongly exaggerated. But it does not reject in principle and for all time every colonial policy, as this may have a civilizing influence under a socialist regime."

The resolution which was defended by MacDonald was ultimately rejected by 127 votes to 108 in favor of the final resolution adopted, which runs thus:

"The Congress declares that capitalist colonial policy in its innermost essence of necessity leads to the enslavement of the colonized areas. The civilizing mission which capitalist society professes serves only as a cover for the thirst for exploitation and for conquest. Only a Socialist society will first offer all nations the possibility of full cultural development."

Both MacDonald and Vandervelde, the future imperialist ministers, voted ultimately for the final resolution, but the policy they represented has now been carried into practice in the Second International.

That was the first period of the L. S. I. The second period began with the outbreak of the war when each Socialist Party hastened to the rescue of its own imperialist bourgeois

sie and led the workers to slaughter by millions. Each Socialist Party demanded the liberation of the colonial countries under the rule of the enemy but suppressed the liberation movements of the colonial countries exploited by its own imperialist bourgeoisie.

When the war was over the social democrats began to reconstruct the International as an adjunct to the organization of imperialist bandits known as the League of Nations. It is these socialists that helped British imperialism to seize the Arabian countries and East and Southwest Africa, Samoa and New Guinea, French imperialism to exploit Syria and Cameroon and Japanese imperialism to add the Pacific islands to their possessions. Not only that, they helped all the imperialists to put down by force of arms the rising movements of revolt in the already existing colonies.

It was Varenne, the French Social Democrat, who initiated and perfected the regime of terror and oppression in Indo-China. It is the Dutch social democrats that have helped the imperialist Government of Holland to suppress with brutality the risings of the Indonesian people in 1925-1926. Vieming, the Dutch social democrat, laid down the policy of his party in a pamphlet which has been sold through the party apparatus and in which it is declared "that Indonesians are not yet ripe for self-government and that when the Socialist Party comes in power it will have to accept the colonial legacy." The social democrats of Belgium are themselves engaged in colonial exploitation in the Congo through plantations and other companies whose profits, squeezed out of the blood and sweat of Negro slaves, find their way into the coffers of the Party.

But there is no country in which social imperialism has taken up "the colonial legacy," to use the phrase of Mr. Vieming, with such gusto as Great Britain. Under no Conservative imperialist government have there been more hangings and shootings, more frequent use of bombing planes, machine guns and tanks, more drastic suppression of the freedom of speech, press and assembly, more political prisoners in jail, more corruption of working class leaders than un-

der the government of Ramsay MacDonald and the British Labor Party which is the main pillar of the Second International.

Whereas in 1925, when the Moroccans were fighting heroically against the French imperialist invaders, the International Socialist Congress held in Marseilles in that year dispersed without having said a word on the colonial question, the social imperialists find that they can no longer ignore the tremendous movements of national revolt against imperialism that are now taking place in all the colonial countries.

In the draft resolution of the Colonial Commission of the L. S. I. at its session of June 2 and 3, 1928, which was adopted with a few changes at the Brussels Congress of the L. S. I. held on August 5 to 12, 1928, the word imperialism is nowhere used at all. And the whole treatment of the colonial question is based upon the assumption of the civilizing mission of capitalism in the colonial countries. So the L. S. I. at the Brussels Congress declared that it supported "the endeavors of the Indian people to attain full self-government," but carefully avoided the word independence.

But even though the Brussels Resolution did not go beyond self-government for India, which reflected at that time the maneuvers of Ramsay MacDonald in opposition, the voice of Ramsay MacDonald in power is heard in the resolution on India which has just been passed in Berlin by the leaders of the social imperialist International. The resolution runs thus:

"The Executive recalls the Resolution of the Brussels Congress of the L. S. I. which recognizes the rights of the peoples of India to self-determination.

"It is convinced that through negotiations between the British Labor Government and the representatives of all sections of the Indian population that right can be exercised under the safest and most effective conditions.

"It is confident that the British Labor Government will make these negotiations possible, that in order to facilitate them it will consider an amnesty for

political prisoners as soon as possible and that it will conduct the negotiations in such a manner that they will lead as early as possible to full responsible self-government."

There is not a single word of condemnation of the regime of terror that is being carried on by the MacDonald Government in India. The policy is now receiving the support of all the parties of the social imperialist International. These social imperialists declare that they recognize the right of self-determination for India and they call upon the so-called "Labor Government" to enter into negotiations.

But they do not ask that the imperialist troops shall be withdrawn in order to allow the right of self-determination to be exercised. There is not the least doubt that negotiations conducted at the mouth of British guns will allow the right of self-determination to be exercised "under the safest and most effective conditions"—for British imperialism.

It is further worth noting that the resolution speaks not of the Indian people but of the Indian "peoples," and thereby deliberately repeats one of those expressions that had been created by imperialism to produce the impression of the diversity that exists with regard to race, religion, language, etc. in India, and therefore to justify the benevolent rule of Great Britain that brings peace and unity to this heterogeneous mass.

Let it be noted also that the proposed negotiations of the Labor Government are to be conducted with the "representatives of all sections of the Indian people." This is another way of speaking about the notorious Round Table Conference, which is being talked about for the last ten months and which has been definitely called to London for the 20th of October.

But with whom will the negotiations be conducted at that Conference? With the princes, the landlords, the industrial and the commercial bourgeoisie, with the national reformist bourgeois leaders and with those labor reformists that have been working as the tools of the Labor Party and the General

Council in order to destroy the working class movement in India.

But the people of India is not only demanding but actively fighting for full national independence, and the L. S. I. has openly declared itself on the side of the enemies of freedom. The resolution deserves to be circulated widely among the masses of India and particularly among the working class in order to expose once for all those Indian leaders like Shiva Rao, Joshi, Chamanlal, Bakhale, etc., who are calling upon the Indian workers to place their faith in and cooperate with these European betrayers of the working class and the colonial peoples.

It ought to be noted that in all these maneuvers the MacDonald Government is receiving very valuable support from the Independent Labor Party (I. L. P.) whose political secretary, Fenner Brockway, is a member of the Executive of the L. S. I. While in the L. S. I. Executive Brockway is a party to this shameful resolution on India, in the I. L. P. he and his colleagues assure the bourgeois leaders of India that the I. L. P.

stands for India's independence. A letter to that effect was recently sent by Maxton, Brockway, and other I. L. P. men to Gandhi. But while Gandhi and Brockway use the word independence, they both mean a place for India *within the Empire which they have coated with sugar and called the Commonwealth.*

It is perfectly clear from the attitude that is being taken up towards the Indian revolution by all political parties in Europe from the extreme nationalists to the social democrats that there is a united front of the imperialist powers against the colonial countries; that they are most anxious that British imperialism should not be weakened in India and that this anti-Indian feeling so clearly expressed in the L. S. I. resolution, is only a part of the offensive against the only anti-imperialist State in the world, the Soviet Union. But the maneuvers of these lackeys of imperialism will be frustrated by the masses whom they try to deceive and they will be swept off the earth along with those in whose interests they are doing the dirty work.

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