

# Trial of Indian Revolutionaries

By S.

## I.

**I**N its day, the Cologne trial of members of the Communist League,—the first trial of the foremost section of the awakening proletariat organised by the bourgeoisie—was by Marx called a “police tragi-comedy.” “Just as scenic effects held in the background and hidden behind the wings suddenly at the end of the opera blaze up in the light of Bengal fire and amaze all eyes with their dazzling outlines, so the close of this Prussian police tragi-comedy saw the clear emergence of the workshop in which the ‘minute-book’ and the forged document on the basis of which the charge had been built up, had been fabricated. On the bottom step of the amphitheatre appeared the unfortunate spy Hirsch; then came the agent-provocateur, the City merchant Fleury, then the police-lieutenant and diplomat Grey; and at the top was the Prussian embassy. . . . The palace of the Prussian embassy was the hot-house in which this minute-book had blossomed.”

Since this delineation was written the bourgeoisie have resorted hundreds and thousands of times to the miserable hypocrisy of “legality” in order to conceal their methods of dealing with the fighters of the working class. Among the *dramatis personae* of these judicial spectacles, the heroes described by Marx invariably figure in some rôle or other: the spy, the provocateur, the forger and finally the government itself; the “independence,” “inviolability,” “objectivity” and so on of the judges consist in all the laws and codes amounting only to the howl of the mortally terrified owner: “Only theft can now save property, only the crime of perjury can save religion, only incest can save the family, only anarchy can save order.” The trials of the Communists are therefore always in two acts, which although they develop simultaneously are separated from each other not even by the footlights, but by the barricade. There is the tragedy of the young class whose representatives are being exterminated by the bourgeois court, if only on the basis of the “legal fact” that they have been imprisoned and brought before that court. And there is the

comedy of the inveterately lying, corrupt class clinging to power, and seeking to find some pretext for its murderous extermination.

Both these aspects, the tragic and the comic, find clear expression in the trial of the representatives of the struggling masses of India, which British imperialism has so ostentatiously arranged in Meerut. The resolutely rising movement of revolutionary development in that country on the one hand, the complete political, economic and moral bankruptcy of the British governors, despite all the strength of the positions they still hold, on the other, result in the characteristic outlines of the Meerut trial being thrown into particularly clear, well-defined and high relief.

The tragic element in Meerut emerges especially clearly if one takes into account those efforts, exceptional by their self-sacrificial quality, which the workers of India are making to emerge from the state of disintegration and amorphousness, and in order to destroy the imperialist-exaggerated, caste, tribal and religious prejudices, in order to construct themselves as a class capable of heading a great revolution. The Meerut prisoners are simply flung up by the masses; they have been educated by them; they have grown and developed as the result of a mass revolutionary struggle; they have developed at the cost of those heavy sacrifices which the masses have suffered and are continuing to suffer, in order to correct the errors of the leaders, in order jointly with them to learn from the experience of those errors. India’s isolation from international revolutionary experience renders the creation of steadfast, inflexible proletarian ranks especially necessary; but that same isolation renders the accomplishment of that task difficult. This explains the strong and simultaneously touching devotion which the workers of India display to their still comparatively recently thrown-up leading ranks.

It is well known that when the score or so of Bombay revolutionaries were arrested, Calcutta was inundated with military, literally as though it were a captured city. The wave of strikes in protest against the arrests was broken only after the government had every-

where brought military force to bear, occupying factories with troops and driving the workers in with machine-guns. But despite the ruthless terror the workers did not allow the banner which the arrested workers carried to remain in the hands of the police even for a single day. Instances are rare in which, after the mass arrest of leaders, after the break-up of all the left-wing organisations, the movement has continued so unbrokenly as now in India. "We shall show them that today is not 1922, and that our movement is no Gandhist passive resistance movement, in which imperialism, having bribed certain leaders and removed others, could celebrate their victory"—such would appear to be the thought of the Indian workers as expressed not in words but in deeds.

In nothing was the enormous potential revolutionary forces which are accumulated in the toiling masses of India so fully expressed as in the speed (not everywhere identical) with which the proletariat threw up new leaders after the arrests. Imperialism would like to represent the arrested as a "handful of agitators," inspiring destructive ideas and fastening those ideas upon India. Life has already shown that behind the accused stand millions of the masses. The chief charge against the accused is that they carried on strikes, especially the Bombay strike. In connection with the Bombay strike of 1928, which had been particularly obstinate and protracted, no less than 170 meetings of workers had been held, at which Communists spoke. But immediately after the arrest a second strike broke out, which in regard to organisation, consciousness and clarity of leadership was an enormous step forward by comparison with the first.

The arrests had not destroyed the link between the masses and the revolutionary leadership, and had made that leadership more experienced, steadfast and determined. British imperialism, with its world strike-breaking experience, realises what it means when in place of the administration of the Girni Kamgar union a new one arose out of the masses. The employers' and police attempt to slip their own agent into this administration was immediately exposed by the workers and prevented. The strike leaders, workers from the enterprises, share with the rest the burden

of picketing, distribution of leaflets, the struggle with police provocation, and so on.

But this astonishing growth in the organisation of the masses has been replied to by the authorities under the MacDonalld government by a still more abominable terror than that which prevailed under Baldwin. The police bands flung themselves on the Trade Union leaders, and beat the president of Girni Kamgar, Kandilkara, until he was half-dead; but were quickly convinced of the revolutionary enthusiasm with which the unarmed masses stand by their leaders, what resolute resistance they make to the civilised executioners. Smashed and broken up by the police, Kandilkara is struggling between life and death. But as the result of the violence done to him, despite the difficulties, unprecedented even in India, and the mobilisation of all the forces of the bourgeoisie, the textile strike was consolidated, as the *Times* had to admit.

And now those leading ranks, created by the proletariat with such difficulty, the flesh of their flesh and bone of their bone, are torn away from the mass organisations, thrown into cholera and tuberculosis-infected stone jugs, where some of the arrested men (Hati, Mutsiphar, Akhmet, Spratt, and others) have already been reduced to the last degree of physical exhaustion. The young working class of India are the central character in the tragedy of Meerut.

## II.

On the same stage, but with quite a different acting personnel, is being played out the Meerut comedy: boorish, untalented, clumsily produced. But not at the end of the performance, as Marx observed of the Cologne trial, but at the very beginning its Bengal fires have dazzlingly lit up all the machinations, intrigues, provocations in the Meerut affair, and its chief actors are as visible to sight as though they were in broad daylight. There is the agent-provocateur, the diplomat, and at the very apex stands the government. The judicial examination, which began on June 12th, has so far consisted of the "opening speech" of the Public Prosecutor Langford James; his speech was offered in two two-day portions; the interval between them was needed by Mr. James in order to prepare his astonishingly boorish and ignorant, slanderous mess. No

cross-examination of the accused, no summoning of witnesses, no presentation of documents: so far only the prosecuting counsel has spoken. When will he end? How many more two-day fountains of eloquence before the case begins to be heard? No one knows! The "court" does not think it necessary even to inform the accused. Simultaneously the Viceroy of India makes speeches at a banqueting table calling for the punishment of the accused. Thus the judicial examination in the real sense of the word has not yet begun, but its miserable failure is already completely revealed.

The MacDonald government, which is carrying out work of the bourgeoisie, is mischievously throwing a light veil over its participation in the Meerut affair. "An astonishing argument," the *Daily Herald* remarks of James' speech. "A stupid argument," say the "left-wingers," *i.e.*, the most far-seeing and clever politicians in the Labour Party. In a month or two, when James has let himself go even more, they will possibly be saying: "A deplorable argument." But no, my dear sirs, you will not succeed in sweeping away the traces of your share in the Meerut trial. You are prepared to "admit" the crudity, the stupidity, and even the lunacy of Mr. James. But that is not the point. Crudity? But James has been the president of the European Association, an organisation highly cultured, and all but constituting a second government in India. Stupidity? But James was specially selected by the government out of all its multitude of barristers for the prosecution at Meerut, and was not merely selected, but was hired at a considerable price (the British Minister of Labour, Thomas, must not be offended, but James receives even more than he does.) An insane malice? But that is the highest merit and virtue when a prosecution of Communists is concerned. No, James is not the trouble! He is merely a loud-speaker. At the microphone is not James, but the "intelligent," "cultured," "humane" "Labour" government of Britain. Not Mr. James, but the Rt. Honourable J. Ramsay MacDonald is the chief comic lead in Meerut.

It is not mere coincidence that the British government contrived the Meerut affair under Baldwin and is continuing it under Mac-

Donald. It is not by accident that that government is taking all measures and sparing no sums in order to advertise it to all the bourgeois world. British officials were always distinguished for their royal munificence at India's expense. But whilst, despite the deficit in India's State budget, and in face of the growing mass deaths from starvation, throwing ten million rupees into the financing of the Meerut enterprise, even viewed from the morality of colonial robbers they have to give some explanation why this "sumptuous" production is necessary. Several hundred witnesses have been summoned, including some from Europe, tons of "material proofs" are being prepared, the newspapers promise that the trial will drag out for not less than a twelvemonth. And what publicity! The government is not only paying special attention to the telegraphic agencies, not only instructing special officials to look after them, but without a blush of shame it is openly assuming the responsibility of "paying the expenses for the transmission of long telegrams concerning the trial to the Indian and foreign press, through the Associated Press News agency." (See *Hindustani Times*.) Hitherto such methods of world publicity have been resorted to only by the largest entrepreneurs, when organising a boxing bout for the world's championship. Apparently under MacDonald such methods have for the first time in history been openly applied to demonstrate the impartiality of the judges.

What is all this? Merely stupidity, boorishness, frantic malice? No: there is purpose in it all. Stupid, boorish, frantic, yet none the less purposeful. Through the Meerut affair and its publicity, British imperialism is trying to show that it not only is strangling and plundering India, is not only suppressing by armed force any struggle for the liberation of the country, not only drowning the workers' and peasants' movement in blood, but that it also dares to pass judgment. In all the respectable bourgeois homes the Communists are being "tried"; then why should not the colonial enslavers, especially at the moment of a new outbreak of terrorism, represent the affairs as though they were handing over their burden of India to an "impartial court," and

doing so furthermore on questions of "principle"?

But the situation of British imperialism in India at the present time is characterised by the very fact that it cannot find even the slightest and most formally respectable court, even from the bourgeois view-point, to handle the trial of the accused. The defending counsel have wasted no small quantity of ink in proving to the Meerut court the complete absence of even the hypocritical shadow of legality in the actual fact of the transference of the case to its jurisdiction. The accused demand that their trial should take place in accordance with the law, and with the participation of a jury. One may hardly imagine that the accused have any illusions that a jury composed of representatives of the ruling classes could come to a dispassionate estimate of their activities. Experience has shown that such jurors prove to be on the side of bourgeois force and against the toilers. Marx wrote in his day :

"But, the jury said to themselves, if the Prussian government has risked proceeding against the accused with such contemptible and such merciless methods, if it has staked its reputation in Europe, so to speak, then the accused, no matter how small their party, are evidently extremely dangerous and their teaching must in any case be of some power. The government has violated all the laws of the criminal code in order to defend us from this criminal monster. Then let us also in our turn lower our good name a little in order to save the honour of the government. We will be grateful to it, and condemn them."

But that is the trouble : British imperialism has no "jurors" in India. What was possible to Prussian reaction in Germany in 1852, after the defeat of the revolution, is impossible to British reaction in India in 1929, at a moment of the rise of the revolutionary wave. Moreover, British imperialism cannot allow itself even what it conceded two years ago during Spratt's first trial, when the case was heard in the presence of jurors. For not only are the dimensions of the movement absolutely different, but the whole situation of British imperialism has changed considerably for the worse. With all the servility of the Indian bourgeoisie, with all its treachery, the govern-

ment cannot decide on drawing it into participation in the trial in any form whatever. The indignation against British imperialism is so general, so national, so severe in its character that the government cannot risk trusting its case at the trial even to those who at the official receptions of the viceroy or in some other secluded retreat reveal their utter complaisance and willingness to oblige. The strength of the pressure exerted by the masses in India at the present time is such that Indian jurors, no matter how "trustworthy" they might be, might not remain firm in an open court and would surrender the government positions.

The Meerut trial, contrived by British imperialism with a view to showing that "there are still judges even in India," has demonstrated the converse : there are no such judges. There are left only police officials, warders, pogromists and hangmen.

### III.

According to the intention of the organisers of the business the prosecutor in the Meerut trial should constitute the ideologist of imperialism, the interpreter of its philosophy, morals, religion, jurisprudence and so on. Imperialism has no intention of revealing itself in its true nature—through the mouth of its public prosecutor it desires to appeal to the "understanding of every reasonable, moral, decent, man." Besides the slave-driver there is also MacDonald, who could not fulfil his functions as a bourgeois lackey if he did not simply abjure all revolution "generally." And there is Purcell, who only quite recently was preaching the "victory of the Socialist system in the Great Indian Peninsula." The heart of Mr. James has to be of a large size : it has to accommodate Baldwin and MacDonald and Purcell ; who knows?—possibly yet a fourth who still tricks himself out in brilliant scarlet, anti-militarist feathers.

That is why Mr. James may not simply brandish the knout : that is no fit theme for long, "freely" transmitted telegrams. In order to play his part he needs make-up and noble airs. And in fact the Meerut prosecuting counsel is pretending that he demands penal servitude for the accused not because they are in favour of revolution, not because they are in favour of a national revolution, not even

because they are in favour of Socialism. Apparently he could forgive all that. Then for what reason are those who pay him shooting and torturing in prisons? The prosecution does not make an immediate reply to this question.

Yes, no matter how strange it may appear, the former President of the European Association is not against all revolution. He devoted the beginning of his speech to elucidating this extraordinarily important question.

"Now the slogan which most satisfactorily to my mind sums up their intentions, is 'Long Live Revolution.' A revolution is ordinarily an incident in time; it happens, it is done away with, and it gives place to that brighter and better state of things which, any way in the minds of its authors, it is destined to usher in. But the revolution which these accused have conspired to forward, which they have visualised, is indeed a revolution that lives long. It goes on. It is a continuing and almost perpetual revolution."\*

Thus the Public Prosecutor is not against all revolution. He has probably heard something about there not being one, even the most benevolent government in the world, which has not in the past, near or distant, suffered several bloody revolutions and violent overthrows. In particular undoubtedly he has nothing against the revolution which, truly in the most dull-witted and self-interested fashion, was carried through by the British victors in India when they broke up the village commune, destroying the native crafts and thus opening markets for the British textile industry. He is probably not against that truly decidedly original "revolution" in agriculture which has been projected by British imperialism, but which it has not yet decided to carry out, and which in the name of the development of capitalist agriculture will at once sentence tens of millions of peasants to death by starvation. But in accepting revolution Mr. James stipulates that it should "yield place" to a more enlightened and a better system. On the basis of philological, albeit illiterate investigations, he comes to the conclusion that in shouting "Long live" the ac-

cusèd are not striving for that. But it is permissible to ask who is the enemy of himself? Who would not strive for that system which in his opinion is better and more enlightened, *i.e.*, is an aim of revolution?

Of course the prosecution may object that his "tastes" do not coincide in the least with those of the accused, that the system which seems better to them is not to be endured by him, and that therefore he regards revolution as criminal. But if it had simply declared so much it would have been quite superfluous to "convict" the prisoners; without further wasting words they would have "confessed" that the revolution for which they have struggled and will continue to struggle has nothing in common with either the tastes or the interests of the European Association. The task of the prosecution would have been lightened to an extraordinary extent; they had been caught, they would be hanged or tortured. But then there would never have been any trial! And Baldwin, and even more MacDonald, wanted not only to shatter the organisations of the young Indian proletariat, but also to compel them to admit themselves politically and morally bound up with the existing system of colonial spoliation and barbarian exploitation.

"Especially comic," wrote Engels in 1885, when the law against the socialists was rampant in Germany, "sounds the demand to renounce the revolutionary nature which inevitably arises from historical conditions, when that demand is addressed to a party which has first been placed outside general right, *i.e.*, outside the law, and then is desired to recognise the legal basis which has for that party been annihilated." British imperialism is out to achieve a great deal in Meerut: it would like to present a demand to renounce revolutionary nature inevitably arising out of historical conditions not merely to a single party, but to the hundreds of millions of Indian workers and peasants.

Hence we get the second liberal gesture of the Meerut public prosecutor, the one in which, at the beginning of his speech truly, he extends the olive branch of peace to the national bourgeoisie, addressing himself directly to the National Congress of the Swaraj party. Mr. James appears to be not against even a national revolution. On the contrary,

\*The quotations are made from the text published in the Calcutta newspaper *Liberty*, the issues for 14th and 26th June, and in the *Bombay Chronicle*, for 26th June.

he accuses the defendants of wanting to carry out an anti-national revolution.

It is necessary, he indicates, to avert a possible misunderstanding. The revolution which the accused were working for is not a national but an anti-national one. They had feelings of hatred for a very wide circle of people. But those who are customarily regarded as the representatives of the Swaraj for India movement met with the especial hatred of the accused. And in enumerating the representatives of the Swaraj movement which he is willing to take under his protection against the evil hatred of the accused, the prosecuting counsel mentions by name not only Motilal Nehru, but also the "left-wing" Jawaharlal Nehru and Subash Bose and deceased individuals. In an outburst of noble indignation against the accused because they have not shown sufficient respect for these worthy personages, the public prosecutor exclaims: "You do not love your country, you are anti-country, you are anti-God and anti-family. You have ruthlessly to hate those who differ from your views and when the proper time arrives you have as ruthlessly to kill them. . ."

But on what conditions does the prosecuting counsel consent to defend the nationalists against the Satanic plans of the accused? In what capacity does British imperialism "recognise" the national bourgeoisie and is ready to receive no only the old, but also (oh, terrible!) the young Nehru also? Only on the conditions and in so far as they will wage a ruthless war jointly with imperialism against the working class and the peasantry. But as soon as these generally recognised personages dare to say one word about the liberation of India from the British yoke they will be immediately transformed into the worst of criminals. The charge made by the prosecuting counsel against the accused is formulated in such a fashion that, after dealing with the given category of accused it can, and even from the aspect of juridical logic it ought to be brought against those nationalists who refuse to kiss the imperialist whip. And if the petty bourgeois intelligentsia has not been completely muddled in his miserable diplomatic game he has to understand that the juridical sword which is being sharpened in the Meerut court

may at any moment be allowed to fall even on his more than satisfactorily humble neck.

#### IV.

Finally, Mr. James sufficiently understands the spirit of the times—(Baldwin's son, a shareholder in his father's firm, speaks in the House of Commons in the name of the Labour Party!)—not to wash his hands even of Socialism without some reservation. When charging the accused with the organisation of May Day demonstrations, he unexpectedly displays a necessity to make a lyrical aside, above which the newspapers set the caption: "Mr. James looks back to his youth." It appears that in Mr. James' time in England May Day "was a day of rejoicing." What has changed since then? Has Mr. James repented the sins of his youth? Or has the May Day celebration lost its former character? The second appears to be the case.

"In these go-ahead days," says the prosecuting counsel with murderous irony, May Day is "regarded as the awakening day of labourers. . . At all these demonstrations the accused had made speeches wherein they lauded Lenin, that great martyr to this cause," and they "initiated the proletariat into the mysteries of class war and dictatorship of the proletariat." Enlightened imperialism thus recognised the First of May, but also on conditions: it had to be without Lenin, without a class struggle, without the dictatorship of the proletariat. The *Daily Herald* has no right, and not even justification for abjuring Mr. James; in somewhat distorted, but quite popular form he expounds the programme, and of still more importance, the practice of the Second International and all its Zörgiebels during the May Day demonstrations of the proletariat.

The prosecuting counsel's intellectual affinity with the Second International is also revealed in his determination of the question whether it is permissible for the Communist Party to exist. "In England," he said, "a Communist Party could not exist legally; it had to remain there secretly. In India a Communist Party could exist legally while its members did not wage war against the King." We will pass over the somewhat unexpected declaration of the official representative of

governmental authority that the C.P.G.B. cannot exist legally. These burlblings in reality more truly represent the actual situation of the Communist Party in Britain than do all the constitutional guarantees of the "Labour Government." Even more characteristically does James hint at the conditions on which he would permit the existence of a Communist Party in India. As we know, such a pseudo-party did at one time exist, of course, only on paper. To this end, it appears, not much is demanded: only that it should not begin to "wage war against the King." What does the prosecuting counsel understand by these terrible words? He sees a summons to this "war" in a speech of the president of the All-Indian conference of Workers' and Peasants' Parties, Joshi (not to be confused with the reformist Joshi) and expounds Joshi's thought in the following words: "He did not like that the king, the governor-general and governors should be retained in the constitution of the Indian Government. Their slogan was complete independence and complete freedom." (What constitution; by whom and for what eternity established?)

So it appears that the king does not "walk by himself"; he has a long tail: a governor-general, governors, and if excessive modesty had not restrained the prosecuting counsel from continuing the list, undoubtedly he would have included the European Association also, whose right to the plundering of India is of some little value. "Not to wage war against the king" means uncomplainingly to carry on your back all this hierarchical tower of parasites. That is all the law and the prophets for the imperialist parties of all varieties, from Baldwin to MacDonald inclusive.

A "revolution," a "national revolution," even a "Communist Party" if you like! But "on conditions": none of this may stretch out a hand against the "natural" rights of the exploiting band. None of your strivings for "complete independence" (and unfortunately that it just the expression used in the resolution of the national congress!) for "complete freedom." Any attempt upon the colonial monopoly of British imperialism will be punished by Mr. James with penal servitude, and by God's help, with the scaffold.

The prosecuting counsel wants this punitive deduction to be taken into account by all interested parties. The political section of his speech was directed to frightening the bourgeois and petty bourgeois nationalists with all the horrors of a Bolshevik revolution; the juridical section was devoted to frightening the same nationalists, but with the threat of imperialist punishment. Consequently in his punitive conclusions the prosecuting counsel demonstratively emphasised that salvation was not to be found merely in the renunciation of the Third International.

"It is not necessary in order to constitute an offence under section 121A, nor is it necessary to convict these accused of such an offence, to prove that they belong to this Third International. If I show that they were carrying out work on these lines and at the behest of this Third International that is quite sufficient. It is not necessary to show that they were in fact members of a Communist Party definitely formed and affiliated to the Third International. I think that you will come to the conclusion that they were such a party, and if not actually affiliated, they were about to affiliate to the Third International. But I repeat that is quite an unnecessary part of the indictment. . . I do not want to be understood to say that I cannot link up these people with the Third International. I think, and in fact I am quite sure that I can, but the point is it is not really necessary, strictly necessary, to do so."

The slogan of "complete independence" and "complete freedom" thus appears to be quite sufficient to enable Mr. James to set in motion the guillotine of "law 121A." For him the rest is "unnecessary," a superfluous part of the indictment. At whom is this Meerut Thunderer aiming? Of course the nationalist camp is composed of such righteous ones as have succeeded in shaking the dust of the congress resolution from their feet and have forgotten the idea of an independent India. But there do happen to be "transgressors," or such as might become transgressors under certain conditions, especially if it be remembered that the appetites of Public Prosecutors may increase.

The terrorisation of the nationalists: such is the secondary, but very important task of

the prosecuting counsel. Mr. James has made a soft bed for bourgeois nationalism, but it will find sleep difficult enough. But can one doubt that the storm of events will shatter all the Meerut plans to dust?

### V.

The actual "evidence" adduced by the prosecuting counsel against the accused simply cannot be taken seriously so far, whatever may be one's desire. Suffice it to say that the documents which the counsel quotes, publishes, enlarges upon and explains, "deciphers," and so on, *i.e.*, not only interprets distortedly and erroneously but quite shamelessly supplements with his own guesses and imaginations—that these documents which form the basis of all his accusation have so far not been allowed to leave his hands and have not even been presented to the accused.

How far this inventive faculty (the fruit of boorishness, combined with impudence) can go is to be seen from the following: Having discovered that in every Communist Party in addition to the Political Bureau there is an Organisational Bureau, Mr. James unhesitatingly makes the converse conclusion: any organisation possessing an Organisational Bureau *ipso facto* reveals itself to be Communist. Armed with this truth the prosecuting counsel begins to seek for traces of this fatal Orgbureau in the activities of the accused. Fortune smiled on him. He found this or something like it in the correspondence between the accused, and the "murderous" evidence is ready.

"For instance there is the Orgbureau, which means 'Organisation Bureau,' and which is quite in the cry. We shall find it re-echoed by some of the accused in this case. We have no 'org' here or the 'org' is extraordinarily bad. Well, this is the 'org' bureau."

Thus the references which certain of the accused may have made in conversation or in a letter to a comrade to the weakness or the non-existence of organisational work are interpreted by Mr. James as a proof of the existence of the Orgbureau, and consequently of the Communist Party, and consequently. . . etc. One can be sure that the further the prosecuting counsel's imagination develops the

more effective will be the scandalisation of the whole court.

But there is one other point of interest in Mr. James' speech. Desiring to represent the accused as a handful of conspirators, in his sacred boorishness, the prosecuting counsel adduces a number of facts witnessing to the direct converse: namely, to what extensive mass organisations are behind them. Of course in the crooked mirror of the prosecuting counsel's exposition all the facts are distorted, mangled, and possibly exaggerated. But after taking into account the necessity for correcting this prosecuting counsel's inaccuracy, one none the less gets a certain impression if not of the character then at least of the scale of the intellectual and organisational influence wielded by the left-wing organisations in India. We may a number of quotations in illustration of this.

"Referring to the strike activities of the accused, Mr. James said that their minute-books showed that they boasted of having captured and controlled most of the big trade unions. The Public Prosecutor wanted the court to concentrate not on the number of strikes engineered by the accused, but on the object behind these strikes. The object of these conspirators, he said, was to get hold of in Bombay all important—what I should call strategic—points. They wanted to collar railways, dockyards, tramways, commerce and textile industry, and so on, and they very largely succeeded in doing so. They proceeded on exactly the same lines at Calcutta and other centres. They captured all public utility and transport companies. They even boasted of having captured the munition factory at Itchaky and the arsenal at Kirkee. Their intention was, he had no doubt, to get a strangle-hold upon all means of communication in the country, and they attempted to do so at any rate up here in the north, and it was only either because Mr. Usmani bungled in his job or something happened, that they failed to capture the North-western Railway. But they did succeed in capturing the E.I. Railway Union, the G.I.P. Railway Union, the B.B., and C.I. Railway Union, and the Northern Bengal Railway Union. The intention of these accused persons was, Mr. James declared, to bring about a general strike



on an extensive scale on the 1st of May, 1929. That was their immediate objective and it was upon this job that they were engaged when they were arrested. He went on to say that these gentlemen had complete control over the textile industry in Bombay and most of their members were connected with the Girni Kamgar Union, now known as the Red Flag Union, the G.I.P. Workers' Union, the Dockworkers' Union, the Municipal Workers' Union and lately had been added to the list of unions over which this Party dominated, the B.B. and C.I. Railway Union, the British India Steam Navigation Company Union, the Arsenal Labourers' Union at Kirkee and others. In pursuance of perfectly definite plans in Bombay you may say from April, 1928, to October, 1928, there was a practically continuous general strike in all cotton mills. Workers in eighty-two of eighty-four mills struck." (*Bombay Chronicle*, 26th June).

"In Bengal they captured the Bengal Jute Mill Workers' Union at Titagarh, Alambasar and other places. They also captured the textile workers' union of Kessoram Cotton Mills. There are Calcutta Scavengers' Union, Dakeswari Cotton Mill Workers' Union, E.I.R. Labour Union at Lillooah, Howrah Scavengers' Union, Calcutta Tramway Workers' Union, Jute Workers' Unions at Chenjail and Bavaria, Seamens' Union and such other Labour organisations."

The Public Prosecutor sees the influence of the accused in a number of mass demonstrations which have occurred in India. It is characteristic that in specifying these demonstrations he makes particular mention of the comparatively small workers' demonstration in Bombay against the Simon Commission some two years ago. It is not difficult to explain this special attention.

"These gentlemen," he said, "also joined in the demonstrations against the Simon Commission with placards bearing inscriptions: 'Workers of the World, Unite,' and they also took the opportunity for burning the effigies of Messrs. Baldwin and MacDonald. Writing on the question of demonstration against the Commission, Dange said: 'The question is whether we should bring out workers on a non-revolutionary political issue,' but Joglekar scented an opportunity for making a little

capital out of it. He thought that a general strike of some little importance would go a long way towards educating the proletariat."

Himself all-unsuspicious, the Public Prosecutor thus cites a fact witnessing to the class sense displayed by the advance-guard of the Bombay workers at the very beginning of the rise in the revolutionary wave. When they burnt the effigy of MacDonald (who at that time was only in opposition to His Majesty's Government) the Bombay demonstrators were not out in their estimate: under the MacDonald government it is that prosecution of the advance-guard and the first leaders which it has thrown up is proceeding.

Mr. James remembered the words of one of the accused as to the educative importance of a strike so well because any hint of educating the proletariat, especially the youth, causes him to go into a fit of frenzy. "Moscow had insisted on it," he said. "It had said: 'You should get hold of every child from his cradle and teach him class war.' But even in this heap of inaccuracies, fragments and shreds of fact are revealed which show that the issue was not in the least that of teaching suckling babes the art of armed insurrection.

"They (the accused) tried to train up a young Bolshevik group in the country. In Bombay, a resolution was passed in the local youth organisation which advocated Communist ideas. Similar resolutions were passed in the Calcutta Socialist Youth Conference. . . . Anyhow there could be no doubt that steps were taken by the accused for teaching the ideals and principles of Bolshevism to young students. In Bombay, too, similar activities were carried on by the Bombay Party of Communists. Study circles were started by accused Hutchinson, who had a number of books and literature on Bolshevism with him. Books giving vivid descriptions of the Bolshevik activities in Russia were also used by the accused towards that direction."

Mr. James regards Lenin's *State and Revolution* as one of the most dangerous of all those which in his words were studied in the circles. It appears that Lenin misunderstood Marx, or at least understood him not as James would have liked. You see, for the Bolsheviks, Marx exists not in consequence of his philosophy of materialism and his theory

as to the accumulation of surplus value, but in consequence of three other theories: 1, that of class war; 2, that on the State; 3, that on the dictatorship of the proletariat. So it would appear from Mr. James' words. But it is these very three theories which the Public Prosecutor refuses to accept, for the following reasons: 1, class war does not exist; 2, the dictatorship of the proletariat ought not to exist; 3, as for the State, all that has been said (and done!) by Marx and Lenin in this realm pales into insignificance before the theory of the State which the Public Prosecutor himself offers.

"Well now, to come to his (Marx's) theory of the State. I suppose any ordinary person who thinks about the State regards it as an institution which for better or for worse, well or less well, is there to guard the liberties and rights of all the citizens in the State and see to the best of its ability that they all get fair play and equal treatment."

The British government is seeking all over the world for the machinators to whose agitation it ascribes the generally-recognised, albeit unhappy fact that its prestige and authority in India is declining catastrophically. But will it be pleasant for that government to listen to the Public Prosecutor's words, which by all possible methods, by the "payment of expenses of transmission," by open instruction, by scolding and driving are being carried all over India? But what else will this self-enamoured Narcissus of colonial despotism, where State authority is being more and more revealed as savage force, where it maintains its position by a clamant economic, political and social inequality, permit himself to say? He "enchants" his audience with talk

about the State having "to guard the liberties and rights of all the citizens!" In a country where the State authority could not be maintained a single day if it were unsuccessful in provoking religious, caste, tribal and every other kind of fanaticism, so that under the pretext of struggling against that fanaticism it can strangle everybody; in a country where terror stalks licentious and only the violator prospers. To talk in such a country of "all the citizens" getting "fair play and equal treatment" is merely adding fuel to the blaze. If what Mr. James says of the objects of the State is correct then no State authority, no system of rights exists in India; there is only anarchy based on the violence of the conqueror. But once that is so how can anyone twist his tongue into demanding of a great people numbering many millions that they should suffer this despotic anarchy, that they should not rise to effect its overthrow?

Of course, in describing the charms of State authority in a country groaning under an intolerable colonial oppression, the Public Prosecutor is not obliged to be governed by the cautionary advice "not to talk of a rope in the home of the hanged." But then let him not be angered if the toiling masses, before whose eyes Mr. James struts so bravely, jeering at the prisoners, grimacing before his audience, flourishing the instrument of his contemptible trade—let him not be angered if the toiling masses of India call him and the government which hires him by a fitting name. And let MacDonald not be angered if in answer to the Meerut trial the workers and peasants of India increase their efforts tenfold to drive the exploiters, executioners and violators out of their country.