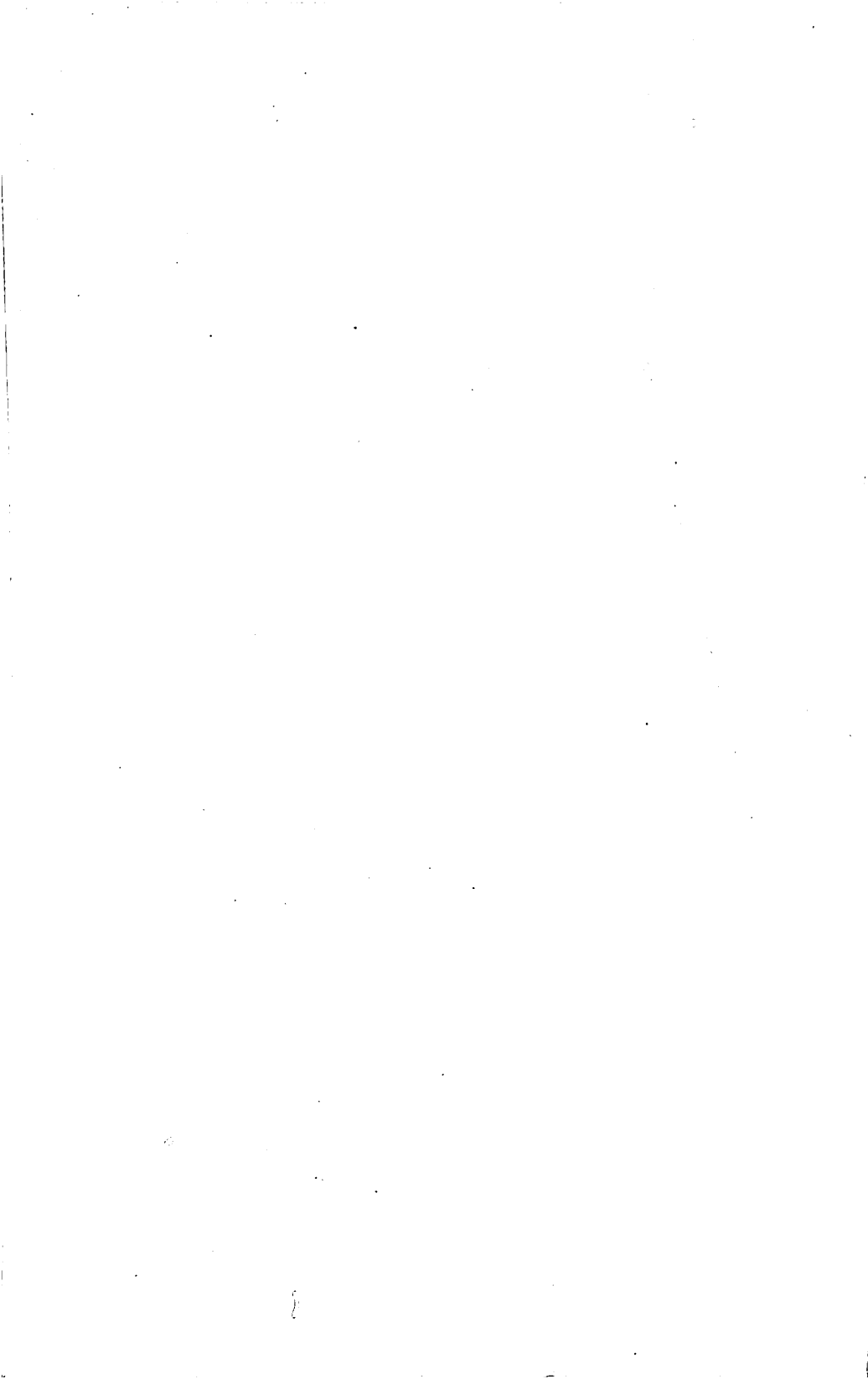


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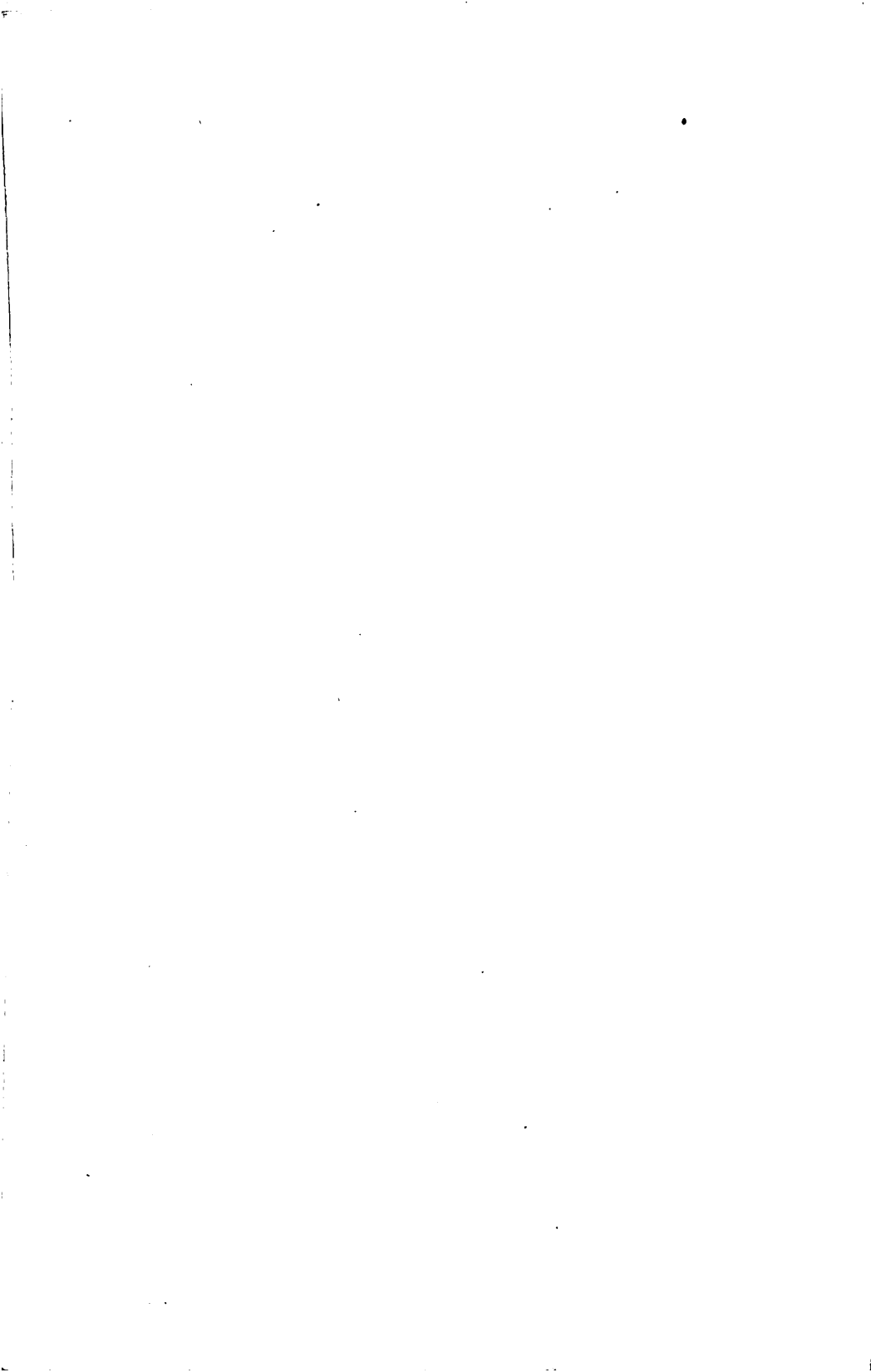
Edited by
G. Adhikari

Volume
III A 1926

PEOPLE'S PUBLISHING HOUSE



DOCUMENTS OF THE HISTORY
OF THE
COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA



Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India

Volume IIIA
1926

Edited with introductory
and explanatory notes by
G. ADHIKARI



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Publisher's Note

The National Council of the Communist Party of India entrusted Dr G. Adhikari to undertake the work of collecting, editing and annotating the documents relating to the history of the Communist Party of India. This is Part A of the third volume of the series.

Preface

As stated in the preface of the second volume of the *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India*, the third volume of the early history of the party would be from the end of 1925 when the party was founded as an organisation at Kanpur to 1929, the year of the countrywide arrest of communists and leftwing trade-union leaders in the wellknown Meerut communist conspiracy case. This was the period of the early mass activities of the party.

In these four years the young Communist Party succeeded in making a breakthrough to mass activity, overcoming the stifling cordon of repression with which the British imperialists were seeking to strangle this rising revolutionary movement at its very birth. This was achieved by building open workers' and peasants' parties in different provinces.

The emergence and the spread of the workers' and peasants' parties, first in Bengal and Bombay and later in the Punjab, Ajmer-Merwara and in UP, and their mass and political activities taken together with the activities of the national-revolutionary groups (miscalled 'terrorists' by the imperialists), which had emerged simultaneously in Bengal, Punjab and UP played a very important role in giving a militant turn to the national freedom movement of the country, as well as to the existing Indian trade-union movement.

It was in this period that a militant left wing emerges inside the Indian National Congress. This left wing, from its rise as a significant mass political force, was fighting for three great objectives:

- (1) The acceptance by the Indian National Congress of the goal of complete independence from British imperialism.

(2) The acceptance by the national freedom movement of an anti-imperialist and antifeudal program of national-democratic revolution so as to bring the vast masses of peasant toilers and the working class into revolutionary action.

(3) The recognition of the fact that India's freedom struggle was a part of a worldwide struggle of the peoples and nations fighting for their freedom and independence from British imperialism and for social progress, which was now rising in the countries of Asia and Africa and which had now a powerful support in the great Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which had arisen after the great October socialist revolution in the vast territories of the old tsarist empire, spanning Europe and Asia.

The emergence of the left wing inside the Indian trade-union movement was marked by the rise of the militant mass trade-union movement—the Red Flag movement of workers and toilers in the factories and fields. This movement from the beginning wrote on its banners three slogans which soon made it a significant mass political force in our country's struggle for national independence, democracy and social progress:

(1) Trade unions are organs of class struggle.

(2) Workingclass movement, while organising and fighting for its economic demands, has a strategic role to play in building a broad united front for the country's national and social liberation.

(3) The Indian workingclass movement was a part of the world workingclass movement fighting against capitalism and imperialism, a part of the world revolutionary process, which was beginning to take on new dimensions with tangible achievements of national and social liberation in the USSR on the one hand and the effects of the general crisis of capitalism on the other, ever bringing into sharp focus the contrast of the two systems.

It was our intention to publish all the four parts dealing with the whole period together. This has not been possible for two reasons—the bulk of the material and the shortcomings of the editorial work. Herewith we are

placing in the hands of the reader Part A dealing with the documents and developments of the year 1926. This will be soon followed by Part B for 1927 which is in the press. These will be followed by Part C and Part D dealing with the crowded years of 1928 and 1929 respectively.

In 1926 the communists repudiate the wrong ideas of "national communism" put forward by Satyabhakta. Rajni Palme Dutt's *Modern India* first published in India in this year gives the leftwing nationalists a clear analysis of the role of different classes in the national freedom movement and stresses the need to turn to the organisation of workers and peasants. It played a useful role despite its shortcomings. The emergence of the Workers' and Peasants' Party in Bengal, the predominance of the voice of the left wing at the political sufferers' conference at the Gauhati session of the Indian National Congress, emphasising the need of a revolutionary program and the turn to the class organisation of the workers and toilers, were a prelude to the events of 1927.

New Delhi,
16 February 1978

G. ADHIKARI

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1926

Introduction

In the year 1926, the central leadership of the Communist Party of India formed at the first communist conference held in Kanpur on 26-27 December 1925 took the initial steps to begin mass activity in the trade-union movement and in the national freedom movement. A modest beginning in the field of trade-union movement, a manifesto issued by the CPI on the hindu-muslim problem in the context of the communal riots of 1926 (Calcutta), the emergence of the Workers' and Peasants' Party and its organ *Langal* and *Ganavani* from Calcutta, the publication in India of R. P. Dutt's *Modern India* and the circulation of M. N. Roy's *The Future of Indian Politics*, and finally the circulation of the Manifesto of the CPI to the Indian National Congress at its Gauhati session (December 1926)—these are the main events reflected in the documents reproduced here.

I

THE SIXTH SESSION OF THE AITUC

This session held in Madras on 9-10 January 1926 was presided over by V. V. Giri. A brief report of the session which appeared in the *Labour Monthly* of March 1926 (Document 1) records the fact that messages were received at the congress both from the Central Council of Russian Trade Unions and from the Red International of Trade

Unions (RILU) on the one hand and from the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU), Amsterdam, and from the British Trades Union Congress on the other. It also records that British Labour Party representative Graham Pole was present at the session. The congress was meeting against the background of a number of big strikes which took place at the end of 1925. These were the North-Western Railway workers' strike and the BN Railway strike, the Bombay textile workers' strike and the strike of the Tata Works workers in Jamshedpur. These are all referred to in M. N. Roy's articles on the session both in the *Inprecor* and in the *Masses* (Documents 2 & 3). These strikes were the precursors of the historic red-flag workers' movement which was to appear on the political arena in 1927-29. We have already recorded how in the North-West Railway strike, the workers took out a procession through the streets of Lahore, proudly carrying the red flag dyed in their own blood.¹ The Bombay textile workers' strike, dealt with at length in Document 2, was "a landmark in the history of the Indian labour movement".

The main cause of this strike was a 11½ per cent cut in wages. The stopping of the usual practice of giving bonus to workers annually (current then in Bombay mills) was another cause. This 1925 textile strike, known to Bombay workers as the "bonus strike" is referred to in these documents as a "lockout". This is because the Bombay mill-owners, who had imposed the wage-cut on the workers to counteract the cotton excise duty put by the government on the industry, refused to open the mills until the workers accepted the wage-cut or the duty was removed. The strike which involved 156,000 workers, lasted from the middle of September to the end of December. It ended in a partial victory inasmuch as with the withdrawal of the cotton excise duty by the government, the millowners withdrew the 11½ per cent wage-cut. Whether the practice of bonus payment annually was resumed by the millowners is not clear.²

1. Cf *Documents*, Vol 2, pp 526-27.

2. Cf *Documents*, Vol 2, pp 527-29.

The *Inprecor* article by M. N. Roy points out that though the TUC session was taking place in the background of such two big strikes, it did nothing to consider the urgent problems arising out of them. For instance, one of the outcomes of the Bombay textile strike was the emergence of a new rank-and-file union. There was one Bombay Textile Labour Union of N. M. Joshi which "functioned... doing some insignificant welfare work and carrying negotiations with the government and the millowners when occasion arose". But out of the "strike committee" which functioned in the course of the strike another union arose which the article says later enlisted 14,000 members in less than two months. This was probably the Girni Kamgar Maha Mandal, with which S. H. Jhabvala and later K. N. Joglekar were associated. Roy's article mentions this other union but does not give its name. But Joglekar in his reminiscences refers to this strike, and according to him the Girni Kamgar Maha Mandal was in existence, though nominally, before the strike itself. He says: "I was cooperating with the (strike) committee and was helping and advising the Girni Kamgar Maha Mandal to keep the unity of the workers during the strike. We planned for the workers to go to their home villages and collected relief for this purpose. In this strike also we got international solidarity assistance and financial help. This time from the British TUC."³

Militant initiative displayed by the workers both in the NW Railway workers' strike and in the Bombay textile workers' strike, placed the formation of a militant trade union on the agenda, but the TUC session did nothing about it. The second question was that of affiliation of the TUC to the international trade-union movement. There were two world TU organisations: the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU) and the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU). As pointed out in the article, Dewan Chamanlal, the former general secretary of the AITUC, had expressed his opinion at the last ILO conference in Geneva that the AITUC would "go neither to Amsterdam (IFTU) nor to Moscow (RILU)". Graham

3. Quoted from English MS (unpublished)—Ed.

Pole, the Labour Party representative who was present at the session as a fraternal delegate, probably pressed for affiliation to the IFTU and N. M. Joshi himself was inclined in the same direction. It is a fact that the TU session took no decision on the question of international affiliation but this meant in fact, the rejection of affiliation to the reformist IFTU. In the later sessions of the AITUC when a left wing had emerged, the decision was not to affiliate to either until international trade-union unity was achieved. Besides, it is important to note that this session adopted a resolution appointing the Workers' Welfare League of India as the agent of the AITUC in Britain, "to represent it (i.e. the AITUC) within the limits of its resolutions" and "for the supply and distribution of information regarding the AITUC". This is noteworthy because Clemens Dutt and Shapurji Saklatvala were prominent among the sponsors of the League.⁴ In a later session, the reformists unsuccessfully attempted to replace the League by the British Trades Union Congress as the agent of the AITUC.

The article in the *Masses* (Document 3) is a comment of the presidential address of V. V. Giri, and he is criticised for stating that the BN Railway strike was "happily averted". He also described the North-Western Railway strike as "unfortunate". Giri belonged to the moderate and reformist school of trade-unionists of N. M. Joshi. In his address he says: "In my humble view, unless very grave issues are involved, even if the labour organisations have great strength behind, they should consider the question twice before plunging into the battle. It is a patent fact that if a strike fails, it cuts the ground under the feet of these organisations and there will be a great setback to the cause of trade-unionism. The unhappy history of the unions which came to grief after strikes is too well known to need mention here."

The issue in the BN Railway strike at the Kharagpur workshop employing about 15,000 workers was a drastic reduction of the hours of work amounting to virtual lay-off of the workers for 14½ days in a month and a consequ-

4. *Documents*, Vol 2, pp 74-75.

ent wage-cut. The strike was "happily averted" but there was a militant movement and the workers got their demands. In the full text of Giri's address we read:

"The workmen rose to a man and were prepared to make any sacrifice and stand by any action that the BN Railway Indian Labour Union might take on their behalf in support of their homes and hearths. Four thousand workmen joined the union in the course of a day paying their day's wages and others followed suit... mass meetings of thousands of workmen were held mornings and evenings, demands formulated and deputations waited on the authorities. The administration was made to realise the gravity of the situation... Better counsels prevailed and the authorities by the 18th December (1925)... all orders mentioned in the notice... were withdrawn."

V. V. Giri was then the president of the BN Railway Indian Labour Union and was active with Mukundlal Sarkar in organising the railway workers. Though desirous of averting strikes, he gave a fitting rebuff to Sir Charles Isaacs, who had boasted in the legislative assembly that "for 2½ years the railways are free from any serious labour troubles". In his presidential address he warned the government of India not to be in a happy delusion that all is well with the railway employees. He said: "As president of this congress, I wish to inform the authorities that unless they take immediate steps in remedying the grievances of the employees after an impartial investigation, troubles are ahead which will be a serious menace both to the employers and employees."

The *Masses* article comments on the dispute which arose in the Tata Steel Works at Jamshedpur and how it was resolved. The comment is based on the facts of the case given by Giri in his presidential address. Giri points out that "the workers there started a powerful union in 1920... it achieved good results as getting increment in the workmen's pay together with regular service and provident fund rules". Later, Giri points out, "relations between men and masters became strained and some important workers were either discharged or dismissed. Efforts at conciliation through the intervention of important leaders

of the country were without appreciable success." The settlement was reached only on the intervention of Mahatma Gandhi through the efforts of the conciliation board. "The company agreed to recognise the association, to collect subscription from the workers' wages and to reinstate M. G. Sethi, a well-known trade-unionist in the company's work." This was announced by Gandhiji in a public meeting at Jamshedpur on 9 August 1925,⁵ and Giri said in his presidential address that "the Jamshedpur Labour Association can now look forward with hope for a complete organisation of the workmen over there".

This is how the facts of the Jamshedpur dispute are presented in Giri's presidential address. The *Masses* article correctly criticises the settlement on two counts. Firstly, though the union was recognised and the victimised secretary reinstated, the agreement was that the Tata Company was to collect the subscription for the union directly from the wages of the workers which meant that "the company will control the fund". Secondly, Gandhiji in his speech not only asks the workers to accept the settlement but to show that they deserve "the generous reconciliation agreed to by Mr Tata...by serving the company faithfully".

All the three documents refer to the resolutions passed at the TUC session. It is a fact that in its main political resolution the session did not go beyond asking for "swaraj or self-government based on adult suffrage" and this is rightly criticised. The session passed a large number of resolutions formulating the concrete demands of

5. Gandhiji's speech at Jamshedpur quoted from *Searchlight* dated 14 August 1925 is given in *Complete Works*, vol 38, p 55. The relevant passage reads thus: "Tata agreed that Labour Association with officers duly elected would be recognised by the company and the company would be prepared to collect subscriptions of the members of the Labour Association from their pay and for that Mr M. G. Sethi and Mr Thomas would be offered reemployment at the company's works" (20,000 were present at the meeting). Gandhiji hoped that the Labour Association would devote its energy for the welfare of the labourers and "the concessions made would end the friction between the company and the tens and thousands of workers".

the workers in the different industries, in the transport and in the railway. The session also passed a resolution expressing the "opinion that immediate steps be taken by the general secretary" to consult the unions "on the desirability of forming a Labour Party of India". A similar resolution had come up before the Bombay session of the TUC (1924) and we have commented on it. It appears that Major Graham Pole who attended this session of the TUC as the representative of the Labour Party spoke of "sending organisers from England to help in the launching of a labour party for India". The record of his speech at the TUC session, however, contains no reference to this;⁶ but it is mentioned in an article by G. A. K. Luhani in the *Inprecor* dated 11 February 1926, as the propaganda of a "number of representatives of the British Labour Party who visited India recently" (Document 4).

The resolution to organise a labour party adopted by the Trade Union Congress was never acted upon, nor did it come up before the succeeding TUC sessions in which the left wing represented by the Workers' and Peasants' Party members made its appearance. Internal political situation report for March 1927 of the GOI home political department mentions that Singaravelu Chettiyar formed a "Labour Political Party" in Madras which was to work on the lines of the British Labour Party. However we have not found confirmatory evidence for this either in the *Hindu* or in a Tamil journal run by Singaravelu at that time.

It is interesting to note that the Madras session of the AITUC received messages of fraternal greetings from the British Trades Union Congress, London, from the International Federation of Trade Unions, Amsterdam, and also from leftwing workers' organisations like the Work-

6. Report on the 6th session of the AITUC appeared in *Langal*, Vol 1, No 8 dated 11 February 1926. It says "Graham-Pole suggested the formation of a 'fabian society' supported by all trade unions on the model of the British Fabian Society."

ers' Welfare League, London, the British Communist Party, London, the USSR Central Council of Trade Unions, Moscow, and from the Red International of Labour Unions, Moscow (Document 5).

The telegram from the USSR Central Council of Trade Unions was probably held up by the British Indian authorities at the time.⁷ *Trud* (Labour), the official organ of the USSR Council of Trade Unions, seems to have immediately criticised this action of the Indian authorities in an article. Actually the message seems to have been received, perhaps some time later, and its text was found in a typed record of the session.

Among the local messages received by the session were those from Lala Lajpat Rai, Dewan Chamanlal, Dr S. K. Datta, Devaki Prasad Sinha, M. K. Acharya, T. C. Goswami (all MLAs), M. Singaravelu and K. C. Mitra, general secretary, EI Railway Union, Lucknow. The message from M. Singaravelu, president of the Communist Party of India, said: "The Communist Party of India convey their fraternal greetings to the All-India Trade Union Congress now holding its sixth session at Madras. The Communist Party wish the congress long period of useful life and activity for securing to the Indian workers their legitimate rights in the country, and the party assures the congress that it will spare no efforts in standing by the congress in its fearless endeavour to serve the Indian masses."

II

THE HINDU-MUSLIM PROBLEM

The communal riots of 1926, though mainly centred in Calcutta and due to local causes, were a part of the British imperialist strategy to exacerbate hindu-muslim re-

7. *India in 1925-26*, official annual publication of the British government in India, mentions "Two telegrams were received from Moscow containing blatant communist propaganda urging the necessity of linking up the Trade Union Congress with the trade unions of the USSR" (pp 195-96).

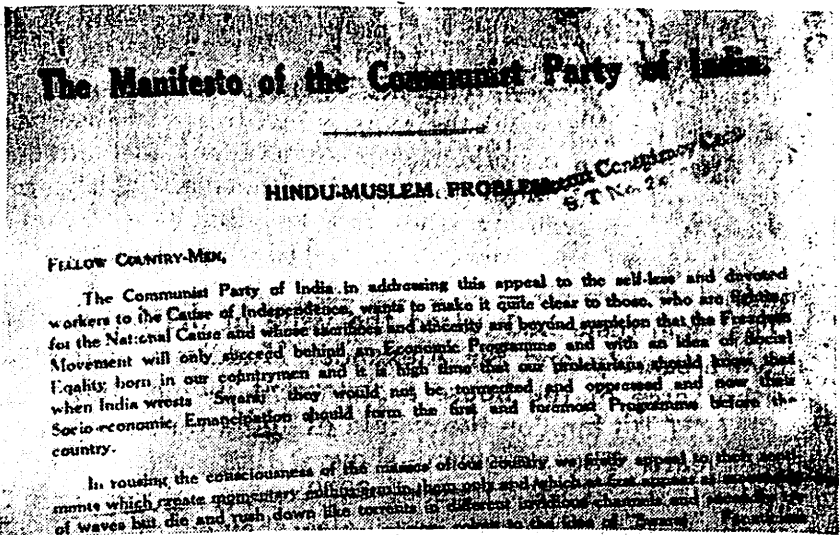
lations in the context of the decline of the noncooperation movement, following its suspension in 1922. Hindu-muslim unity, which emerged in those days of noncooperation and khilafat "was built on the unreliable foundation of religious sentimentalism". The collapse of the national movement of the early twenties was followed by a series of communal riots in north India in 1923-24. The result was the emergence of the chauvinist Hindu Mahasabha on the one hand and of the separatist muslim trend in the Khilafat Conference on the other. The situation has been analysed in the contemporary *Socialist* and in the *Van-guard*.⁸

M. N. Roy's article in the *Inprecor* reproduced in this section (Document 6) carries forward the analysis in the situation of 1926. It points out that the riots of 1926 (especially Calcutta) were instigated by the British government with a view to "break up the Swaraj Party which in the province of Bengal was under certain revolutionary influence". The hindu-muslim pact in Bengal, initiated by C. R. Das with the support of the muslims, had enabled the swarajists to win a majority in the Bengal council in the previous election. The next general election was due in November 1926 and the riots which began in the spring of that year were not entirely an accident. Behind them was the instigation of the powers-that-be, which were keen on undermining the pact so that the swarajist majority in the provincial legislative council was eliminated.

The swarajists had raised the issue in the Indian legislative assembly and Sir Alexander Muddiman had placed on the table of the house a statement giving statistics of communal rioting for the whole of India during the last three years. The statement showed that clashes occurred in 71 places in which about 3000 were injured and 260 lost their lives. The statement also showed that the communal riots of 1926 were the most serious and those in Calcutta accounted for about half the total number of

8. *Documents*, Vol 2, pp 195-96.

deaths and a little less than half the total number of injured in all the three years. Next to Calcutta were the riots in Kohat and Sahranpur.⁹ The British government, in their effort to give themselves a clean bill, brought forward in the legislative assembly a bill confiscating communal literature which, Sir Muddiman said, was the cause of the communal disturbances. A contemporary official publication emphasises the same point. It says "distribution of inflammatory printed leaflets by both sides, together with the employment of hired toughs encouraged the belief that money has been spent to keep the fight going."¹⁰ Roy's article points out how, while imperialism uses for its own purpose the communal conflict instigated by the vested interests in both the communities, the working class in the course of its struggle unites irrespective of religion. It records how "the day after the bloody riots in Calcutta, 7000 workers (hindus and muslims) employed in the jute mills 20 miles away came out on strike as a protest against



9. *Indian Annual Register*, 1926, Vol 2, p 204.

10. *India in 1925-26*, p 248.

the ill-treatment of a muslim worker by an English engineer."

But the most important thing in connection with these riots is the fact that the Communist Party of India issued a manifesto on the hindu-muslim question. Muzaffar Ahmad records in his reminiscences that some time in 1926 Janakiprasad Bagerhatta came to Calcutta. "It was at that time that we on behalf of the Communist Party of India circulated a printed manifesto on the hindu-muslim riot. This manifesto was printed in Sree Gauranga Press in Calcutta... The draft of it was with Janakiprasad Bagerhatta. He told me it had been drafted by Evelyn Roy. But I did not think so... M. N. Roy also might have written the draft."¹¹ Ghate in his reminiscences confirms this.¹² Actually, the original of this document was an exhibit in the Meerut case (Prosecution Exhibit 769 & P 1146). We are reproducing here the facsimile of the same, but not the text, because it is almost identical except for a few opening paragraphs with a similar manifesto printed in *Vanguard* in 1924.¹³ M. N. Roy or Evelyn Roy, it appears re-edited the old manifesto from the *Vanguard* with suitable changes, and sent it to Bagerhatta some time in the spring of 1926, when they got the news of the serious Calcutta riots. It was issued after a meeting of communists in Calcutta. The re-edited manifesto is dated 15 May 1926 and was distributed in Calcutta in the middle of 1926.

The same events were dealt with in an article in the *Communist International*, 30 March 1927, by Safdar (Document 7). He was a muhajir, trained in the University of the Toilers of the East, who worked with the Communist International in the late twenties. He returned to India in the early thirties and was arrested in Karachi. His later career is not known. We are not reproducing this article.

11. Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and the CPI*, pp 438-39.

12. *Documents*, Vol 2, p 607.

13. *Ibid*, pp 209-16 from *Vanguard*, Vol 3, No 4, October 1924..

in full; only a few extracts are given to show how the Comintern looked at the hindu-muslim question in 1926. This article, written some time later than that of Roy, goes deeper into the question and shows how the British are playing the class interests of the muslim bourgeoisie against those of the hindu bourgeoisie, create "a special position" for one community in the electoral system in order to sow discord and rouse a hindu-muslim conflict.

III

NATIONAL COMMUNISM

In the September and October issues of the *Masses of India* appeared an article by M. N. Roy bearing the above title, which rings down the curtain, so to speak, on the role and the career of Satyabhakta in the communist movement. The story of Satyabhakta's ideas about national communism were rejected at the first communist conference at Kanpur and how he resigned his seat on the central executive committee has already been related in the previous volume. Soon thereafter he formed a new party called the National Communist Party of India and on 1 May 1926 he published a two-page leaflet entitled "Indian Communists and M. N. Roy".¹⁴

In his autobiographical book in Hindi *Krantipath-ke pathik* he refers to this leaflet: "Three months after the communist conference, I received a letter from Berlin from one Mr M. P. Acharya, whose name was not known to me at all. He had written 'Roy is making unbridled propaganda against you'. Then on 1 May 1926, I issued a leaflet in reply. Therein I had stated those very things which many people are saying after 47-48 years."

This leaflet was promptly answered by Ajodhya Prasad in the Hindi daily *Pratap* of 30 May 1926. Ajodhya Prasad

14. Ibid, pp 619-21.

who was present at the Kanpur conference, stated that Satyabhakta's views were rejected at the conference; he has now started his new party to slander the communists.

On 2 September 1926 M. N. Roy wrote to Bagerhatta: "The Indian communists abroad are fully in accord with you to combat the mischievous propaganda carried by Satyabhakta & Co of Kanpur; with that object in view we have published a leaflet called 'National Communism' which will reach you soon. Please see that it is reprinted in India and given wide publicity."¹⁵

The pamphlet probably was never allowed to reach comrades in India by the British police, nor was it reprinted. But the copies of the *Masses* seem to have reached India. It was printed in two parts in the September and October 1926 issues of the *Masses*. We are reprinting the article here to show how Indian communists at the time explained the international character of our national-liberation struggle and how they popularly posed the question of affiliation to the Communist International and to international revolutionary workingclass organisations: (Document 9).

IV

"MODERN INDIA" AND "THE FUTURE OF INDIAN POLITICS"

These two booklets, the first of which was published legally in Bombay itself in the middle of 1926, played an important role in legally broadcasting the national-revolutionary program of the party, just when it was about to begin its mass activities through the workers' and peasant's parties. *The Future of Indian Politics* was also published legally, but in England by the end of 1926.

Both the books were openly available in a Bombay bookshop, as has been stated by Philip Spratt in a contemporary

15. Meerut Records, p 783.

review of both the books. *Modern India* became more widely known, not only because it was printed in India, but it was also addressed to a wider patriotic public. In his pre-factory note to the book R. P. Dutt says: "It is an attempt

MODERN INDIA

BY

R. PALME DUTT.

Winds and waves the tidings carry ;
Spirits, in your stormy car,
Winged with lightning, do not tarry,
Spread the news to lands afar.
Tell them, sound the thrilling story
Louder than the thunder, go,
That a people, ripe for glory,
Are determined to be free.

—*Harper Jones.*

PRICE Rs. 2/12.

SUNSHINE PUBLISHING HOUSE

Eastern Building, Princeps Street, BOMBAY.

1926.

to contribute to the discussion of some of the issues confronting the struggle for independence in India, regarding that struggle as a stage in the struggle of the masses in India for emancipation and as a part of world development. It is not possible without very much wider experience and knowledge to make more than an initial contribution to the question; but any contribution may be of value. I hope that the book may be read sympathetically by friends in the great Indian national movement and help towards the discussion of the urgent problem still to be solved."

We are publishing here extracts from *Modern India* (Document 10), the first part of M. N. Roy's book, which is entitled "The Economics of Compromise" and its last chapter "The People's Party and the Proletariat" (Document 11). A slightly abridged version of the first part of Roy's book was already published by him under the title: "The Indian Bourgeoisie and British Imperialism" in the *Masses* of May 1926 (Vol II, No 5).

Both the books put forward more or less the same thesis about the new policy which British imperialism was adopting towards the industrialisation of India after the first world war. In its search for new allies, it was conceding to the Indian bourgeoisie, in a certain way, their demand for industrialisation, while keeping the overall control firmly in its own hand. As a result there was a certain measure of rapprochement between British imperialism and the Indian national bourgeoisie. In *Modern India*, R. P. Dutt puts the matter thus:

"Imperialism since the war has vitally changed its policy in very skilful adaptation to new conditions. Imperialism has taken in hand the development of capitalism in India, reducing Indian capitalism to a subordinate position... The policy of modern imperialism is to win the Indian bourgeoisie in the junior-partnership and the eventual expression of this policy will be found in dominion status."¹⁶

16. *Modern India*, British edition, p 28.

M. N. Roy in the first chapter of his book puts forward the same thesis:



"The exigencies of war obliged British to relax her grip on the economic life of India. Thus began the new era when imperialist interests were so changed as to render

an agreement with the Indian bourgeoisie desirable and profitable."¹⁷

It will be remembered that M. N. Roy's position that the national bourgeoisie in the colonies and particularly in India had gone over to imperialism was rejected at the second congress of the Comintern (1920), under the guidance of Lenin. The supplementary theses presented by Roy at that congress were amended in accordance with Lenin's own theses on the national and colonial question. Later the fourth congress of the Comintern (1922) adopted the "Theses on the Eastern Question" reiterating and concretising the Leninist position by putting forward the slogan of "United Anti-imperialist Front!" These theses had, however, warned against "the hesitation and wavering of the national bourgeoisie" of India to the consistent carrying out of the urgent tasks of the agrarian antifeudal revolution and had, at the same time, stressed the necessity "to compel the bourgeois nationalist parties to the greatest extent possible to adopt this revolutionary agrarian program".¹⁸ But these theses had not taken the position that any section of the national bourgeoisie had gone over to imperialism.

But, at this congress itself, M. N. Roy in his report on the theses had taken the position that "the bourgeoisie was divided into two parts" and that "the upper layer, which was developed industrially" and was "interlinked with imperial capital"... "went over to the imperialists, thus constituting a positive obstruction to the revolutionary nationalist movement".¹⁹ But the fourth congress of the Comintern, as we have seen, had not accepted that position.

But in 1925 J. Stalin and the ECCI itself came to adopt this position though more cautiously. In a well-known speech before the University of the Peoples of the East Stalin specifically referring to "Hindustan" said that

17. *The Future of Indian Politics*, p 13.

18. *Documents*, Vol 1, p 550.

19. *Ibid*, p 541.

"here...the native bourgeoisie is severed into a revolutionary fraction and a compromising or a reformist fraction" and that the latter "has made a common cause with the imperialists against the workers and peasants of its native land". At the same time, he called upon the communists to "openly cooperate with the revolutionary section of the native bourgeoisie, if it is to succeed in isolating the compromising and reformist sections".²⁰

The sixth session of the enlarged plenum of the executive committee of the Communist International (ECCI) which met from 17 February to 15 March 1926 adopted the theses on the immediate problems of the international communist movement. Referring to the conditions of the east, these theses put the matter in even more general terms:

"Because of the gradual industrialisation of the east events there assumed particularly great importance." The theses list some of "the important changes and achievements in the liberation struggle of the eastern peoples" of the period, thus: "(1) The armed uprising in Morocco and Syria; (2) the broad mass character of the national-revolutionary movement in China...; (3) desertion of the national-liberation movement by some sections of the native industrial and trading big bourgeoisie of India and in part of Egypt and China and the transference of the centre of gravity of the leadership of the movement to the revolutionary lower strata; (4) independent class actions of the revolutionary proletariat in China (political strikes in Shanghai, Hongkong, Canton); in India also the rapid industrialisation of the country enhanced the social importance of Indian workers, who are beginning to play an important role in Indian life."²¹

Looking back now, one may not quite agree with the formulation rapid industrialisation as correct for the mid-twenties in India. But the sociopolitical consequences of the

20. *Documents*, Vol 2, pp 575-76.

21. *Inprecor*, 13 May 1926.

process in general are soberly and circumspectly formulated. The ECCI has only stated that "Some sections of the native industrial and trading big bourgeoisie of India have deserted the national-liberation movement" (emphasis added), while it has emphasised the enhanced "social importance of the Indian workers, who are beginning to play an important role in Indian life". The whole question of industrialisation and its consequences was discussed in greater detail and depth about two years later, on the eve of the sixth world congress of the CI and at the congress itself (1928).

The relevant point here is that the ECCI was cautious in March 1926 as we have pointed out above. But M. N. Roy in the first part of his book goes much further. The opening sentence here reads: "Bourgeois nationalism in India has ended in a complete compromise with imperialism, as was predicted years ago by those who judged the situation with Marxian realism." This is followed by analysis of two contemporary events, viz the emergence of the Swaraj Party (1923) and later the split in the same (1926) on the issue of office acceptance under the so-called dyarchy. The first is characterised as the "divorce of the bourgeois-nationalist movement from the most revolutionary social forces—workers and peasants". The comment on the second point, i.e. the split in the Swaraj Party, was that it "removes that last obstacle to a happy compromise between the Indian bourgeoisie and British imperialism, of course, under the hegemony of the latter".

Similarly R. P. Dutt's *Modern India* in its third chapter, "Modern Imperialism in India", emphasises the fact that "the change in imperialist policy since the war is the governing fact of the modern Indian situation" and points out that in the postwar schemes of the British bourgeoisie the "industrialisation of India holds a very important position". R. P. Dutt is careful to point out that "the present industrialisation of India is not taking place for India's benefit any more than the previous relegation of India to the position of an agricultural colony". The aim is to secure

for British capital the predominant position, while relegating to the Indian capitalists the position of a junior partner. R. P. Dutt explained: "The new imperialist policy demanded the cooperation of the Indian bourgeoisie to act as their agents in the exploitation of the Indian masses." "Imperialism is today absorbing Indian capitalism and preparing an economic and political partnership which will eventually take the form of dominion status."²² The bourgeois leadership of the national movement, which had at that time not gone beyond the demand for dominion status is characterised thus in *Modern India*: "...the Indian bourgeoisie cannot be trusted to lead the struggle. At every turn they are to be expected to vacillate, to draw back, to go over to the camp of the government at the critical point. Their interests are already heavily entangled with imperialism and this dependence is increasing."²³

M. N. Roy had reached an identical conclusion in the concluding para of the first part of his book. Here he points out that "the cardinal demands of the national bourgeoisie", viz "impetus to the industrialisation of the country, fiscal autonomy, protection", have been realised incidentally "in consequence of the attempts of British capitalism to overcome the serious postwar crisis by means of a readjustment of the economic basis of the empire". He concludes: "Now it is demonstrated in practice that the economic program of bourgeois nationalism can be realised, in spite of the imperialist opposition to a rapid political change demanded by the petty bourgeoisie. In other words, the bourgeoisie has been convinced that their economic development is possible within the framework of imperialism."

Thus two points in the background analysis of both the books, viz that British imperialism was conceding the demand for independent industrialisation of India and that therefore the national bourgeoisie was going over to

22. *Modern India*, pp 66-67.

23. *Ibid*, p 68.

compromise with it and thus losing its significance in the anti-imperialist movement, were wrong. All the same, both the books, and particularly *Modern India* which was printed in India, played a positive role for these reasons. Firstly, they criticised the compromising and vacillating tendencies of the national bourgeois leadership; secondly, they put forward the slogan of complete independence and a concrete program of anti-imperialist democratic revolution before the national movement; thirdly, they called for the organisation of the workers, peasants and the toiling masses for the creation of a militant mass base which will give a revolutionary orientation to the national movement.

The contemporary reviews of *Modern India* known to us also emphasise these positive aspects. The London *Sunday Worker* produced a review which was reprinted in parts by the *Masses of India* in September 1926. It called it a "Marxist classic", "a weapon in the emancipation of the Indian masses", "... a means of forging an alliance between the workers of this country (Britain) and these same Indian masses for whom indeed the book was primarily written". In the same month, another review appeared in the *Labour Monthly* written probably by Shapurji Saklatvala (it is signed 'S.S.'). He characterised the book as "the forerunner of new political literature on British imperialism and on the genuine economic and social rights to freedom of India's peasants and workers as opposed to those of warlords, landlords, industrial magnates and merchant princes and other princes". In his characteristic style Saklatvala wrote, "We want political science and not patriotic emotion if we are to free the exploited masses in the oriental world. I hope the Indian Trade Union Congress will get the book translated in the principal vernacular languages, viz Urdu, Bengali, Tamil, Marathi and Gujarati, and see to it that some educated person makes it his or her business to read and explain the contents of this book to the peasants and workers speaking these different languages. Within two or three years a new mass psycho-

logy can be developed in India by this process and the people of India can be heartened into taking action, where Gandhiji failed and Das gave up."

Another review of both the books was prepared by P. Spratt some time in the latter part of 1927, after the British edition of *Modern India* was published (May 1927). This review was published in *Ganavani* (Bengali). The English text of this review was an exhibit in the Meerut conspiracy case.²⁴ The reviewer compliments the author of *Modern India* for his "brilliant survey of the history of British relations with India" in the course of which he (the author) "distinguishes *three periods*". The first period is "that of sheer plunder, when the government of British India was in the hands of the East India Company, which was interested in the division of India against itself (and) in chaos rather than (in) order. The *second* was the stage of exchange, when India was mainly a market and a source of raw materials for British manufacturers. In this period, the whole of British capitalism became interested in India, and control was taken over officially by the British government and such conditions created of order, transport facilities, etc. as would facilitate trade. The stage ended roughly with the war (i.e. 1918). The third stage, which we see in development now, is that in which Britain having practically completed its industrial development is forced to invest capital abroad and in the colonies. This means the industrialisation of India, the exploitation of a new Indian working class, and the conclusion of an alliance with the Indian capitalist class."

Spratt further on points out how "home-rule" within the empire—"dominion status"—is the perspective following out of this development of the third stage. "Such a demand", he says, "the Indian bourgeoisie would be willing to accept and the British willing to grant." He concludes, "It would simply give formal expression to the

24. P 415 (10). The judgement of the sessions court (vol 1, p 52) says *Kranti* published its Marathi translation in its issues of 2 and 9 July 1927.

state of things which is actually in operation already—the partnership of the British and Indian bourgeoisie in the exploitation of the Indian masses.”

It is noteworthy that while Spratt in his review written in 1927 from India underlines that Indian bourgeoisie has already become “a junior partner” with British imperialism, Saklatvala in his review written nearly a year earlier pinpoints the contradictions between the Indian bourgeoisie and imperialism even in the context of the so-called home-rule.

The conclusion of both the books is that the communist groups, which have come into existence and are growing despite repression, must now form a broad open party—a people’s party or a workers’ and peasants’ party through which they could take up the dual task of organising the workers and peasants on a class basis on the one hand and by putting the national revolutionary program before the national movement on the other. Here one question arose: Was this new organisation to be a part of the National Congress, while building for itself an independent class-conscious mass base among the toiling masses, led by the proletariat, or was it to be an organisation parallel to and rival to the Congress? Communist International had advised the communists of India in 1925 that they should work inside the Congress, while building the independent class base. M. N. Roy was tending to the view in 1926 that the people’s party will have to be parallel to the Congress. The question was not yet clinched and both the books left the question open.

Spratt writing his review in 1927 in India is faced with the question in practice. He writes:

“Neither Mr Dutt nor Mr Roy is yet clear on the way in which the new people’s organisation will arise. Whether it will coincide with the present congress organisation, furnished with a new program and leadership or whether it will come forth as a completely organised party within the Congress to transform and capture it. Our immediate task is not to quarrel over this problem—circumstances will

solve it for us—but to push on with the work of enlightenment and organisation of the working class and peasants for the struggle against imperialism.’

V

THE WORKERS' & PEASANTS' PARTY EMERGES

Actually some progress was made towards the solution of this problem in 1926, as will be seen from the documents relating to the emergence of the workers' and peasants' parties. First of these documents (Document 12) is the constitution of the Bengal Peasants' and Workers' Party. The party came into existence on 6-7 February 1926 at Krishnagar in the session of the All Bengal Praja Conference (Nikhil Banga Praja Sammelan). The resolution to organise such a party was unanimously adopted. The Labour Swaraj Party which was the sponsor of this conference ceased to exist and its place was taken by the Bengal Peasants' and Workers' Party.²⁵

The party was organised quite independently of the Indian National Congress, but its members were not precluded from joining the Congress or the Swaraj Party and it declared that, wherever possible, it will cooperate with all other parties engaged in national activities. In its program, it demarcated itself from both the Indian National Congress and the terrorist movement and set itself the task of organising the workers, peasants and the revolutionary middleclass youth for a countrywide general strike and a no-tax and no-rent campaign. It called for public utilities being made national property, demanded the property in land to be vested in the village communities and put forward the immediate demands of the workers and peasants. The constitution of the party adopted at the Krishnagar conference and printed in the issue of *Langal* dated 18 February 1926 states this clearly.

25. *Documents*, Vol. 2, pp 671-72, 679.

What did the party achieve in 1926? Muzaffar Ahmad, who was elected a member of the executive committee of the party, records that in 1926 the party was unable to do any work for the organisation of workers and peasants. It had no other branches outside Calcutta except the one at Mymensingh and the total membership of the party was not more than 40. But it had its organ—the Bengali weekly *Langal* which had begun publication on 25 December 1925 as the organ of the Labour Swaraj Party and later continued as organ of the Bengal Peasants' and Workers' Party. In all 15 issues of the paper came out till it stopped on 15 April 1926. On 12 August 1926 the paper was restarted with the changed name of *Ganavani* and with Muzaffar Ahmad as editor and Abdul Halim as manager. *Ganavani* also stopped after nine issues came out for the lack of finances and also because Muzaffar Ahmad and Halim both fell.

Next to Dange's *Socialist* (1922) and *Inqilab* of Lahore (1922), *Langal* and its successor *Ganavani* (1926) were among the earliest communist journals in Indian languages. *Langal* in its March issues published summaries of Marx's two articles on India (1926) and *Ganavani* in August 1926 began publishing the Bengali translation of the *Communist Manifesto* by Marx and Engels. The paper reported the activities of the party in Bengal, it published its manifestos and appeals against communal riots in Calcutta (1926). It published a review of Dange's *Gandhi vs Lenin* (*Ganavani*, Vol I, No 3). It published news of workers' movement in Calcutta, Assam and Kanpur. It reported about the proposal to hold the second communist conference which was never held (*Ganavani*, Vol I, No 5, 9 September 1926). Thus, though it was the organ of the party in Bengal, it was already reflecting the all-India communist movement as it existed then.

Two other documents in this section are from M. N. Roy and Indian comrades abroad, who were in touch with the Communist International. These are: "How to Organise a Workingclass Party" (Document 13) and "The

Program of a Workingclass Party" (Document 14). Both these were published in the *Masses of India* in the issues of November and December 1926 respectively, and were received in India towards the end of 1926. Document 13 with its covering letter dated 13 October (1926) was also received earlier by Janakiprasad Bagerhatta. It was seized from his house in the police search in connection with the Meerut conspiracy case in March 1929.²⁶ The text reproduced here is from the Meerut record.

These documents carry forward the discussion between the comrades abroad and those in India, which was going on since the first communist conference in Kanpur.²⁷ This discussion was carried on in the course of the correspondence that preceded the documents produced here. Most of these letters are fortunately preserved. They are available in the records of the Meerut conspiracy case, as they were intercepted by the police and their copies were produced as evidence against the accused. A brief survey of these letters of 1926 will not only serve as an introduction to the documents in this section, but will also enable us to see how the discussion on the relation between the new party to be formed, viz the workers' and peasants' party, and the Communist Party developed.

The first letter is from M. N. Roy, dated 13 January 1926 which was received in India, on a cover address, in February end. Police intercepted it, copied it and forwarded the original. This was their method of keeping the correspondence going, while monitoring its contents. The authenticity of the copy, which was later produced in the Meerut conspiracy case, need not be doubted as the contents tally with facts known from other sources.²⁸ The letter was written before Roy had got detailed reports of the first communist conference. It contains an uncharitable remark about Singaravelu, that "he is a humbug", based on a false report in the daily press that he was not put up for

26. Meerut Record, p 2323.

27. Cf *Documents*, Vol 2, p 673.

28. Meerut Record, P 2320 (P), P 2320 (PE 1), P 2320 (PE 2).

trial in the Kanpur conspiracy case because he had apologised. We have set the record right.²⁹ But the important point in the letter is how the Communist Party should proceed in relation to the national movement and its organisation.

Reacting to a report from India, probably sent to him by Bagerhatta, that "as soon as there will be a new party large numbers from the swarajists and gandhist ranks will join", Roy writes: "This is a very good perspective. Our line should be a dual organisation: a legal nationalist party with a radical republican program (people's party) and an illegal communist party inside it. The latter should be first formed in a conference of our own comrades. Central committee, names and number of membership, and any other particulars will remain secret. In its manifesto, the communist party will declare that its first task is to help the reorganisation of the nationalist movement on a revolutionary basis. The next step will be to call a conference of the radical elements inside and outside the existing nationalist parties to discuss the plan and program of the people's party. The communists will take the initiative in calling this conference not as communists but as nationalists. The program published before the Gaya congress will be presented to the conference as the basis of discussion and the people's party should be formed on the vital points of the program."

In the course of this same letter, after making critical remarks about Satyabhakta's "socalled CP of Kanpur", Roy goes on to say "on the other hand, the newly-formed Labour Swaraj Party of Bengal seems to be moving in our direction".

The next letter is dated 17 February 1926.³⁰ It is from Muhammad Ali writing in place of Roy. This also talks of a new organisation. It says: "The organisation, which is essentially an organisation of workers and peasants should lay down definite steps in the way of organising the masses, such an organisation should have no place for nation-

29. Cf Documents, Vol 2, p 288.

30. Meerut Record, P 2323 (P).

alist jingoism, it must have relations with the outside world." This is not the people's party referred to in the earlier letter but the open form of the Communist Party itself. Because this is preceded by the following sentence: "In March you should try to give a clear definite shape to the organisation. It is no use repeating the old formula of the defunct Labour Kisan Party." The formula referred to here is about the relation with the Communist International.

This is followed by the next letter by Roy which is dated 20 March 1926.³¹ This letter was written after Roy had received the reports of the first communist conference at Kanpur. It refers to the earlier letter by Muhammad Ali and confirms the suggestion given by him regarding the affiliation of the party to the International. In this letter Roy recognises the communist conference at Kanpur and the CEC elected there and decides to act on its basis for further work. He is critical of such members as Hasrat Mohani and Azad Sobhani, who are "republicans with communist sympathies". He gives briefly some of the principles on which the constitution of a communist party is based. He says: "As regards the constitution of the Communist Party my suggestions are: The Communist Party is the party of the proletariat, only those fully subscribing to the program of the social revolution are eligible to the membership of the Communist Party; people belonging to the possessing classes will not be admitted to the Communist Party; each member of the party will devote a part of his time every day for party work; members of the party are obliged to acquire knowledge of the theories and principles of communism... The party will maintain the foreign bureau as the ideological centre composed of the comrades who are not in a position to work inside the country; the foreign bureau will be representative of the central committee and will act as the organ through which the international relations of the party will be maintained; the Communist Party of India will be a section of the Communist International."

31. Ibid, P 2169(1) (P); cf also *Documents*, Vol II, pp 626-27.

Roy suggested the following minimum program of the party: "(1) Complete national independence (it is not necessary to stipulate anything about the means). (2) Federated democratic republic. (3) Universal suffrage. (4) Guarantee for national minorities (solution of the communal question on the basis of democratic rights). (5) Abolition of landlordism. (6) Nationalisation of land; land will be owned only by those cultivating it. (7) Minimum wages and 8-hour day for the workers. (8) Progressive social legislation. (9) Free and compulsory primary education. (10) Freedom of press, speech and assembly. (11) Equal political and civic rights for women. (12) Nationalisation of the public utilities. The minimum program will be so framed as may assure its acceptance by the republican nationalists. The program outlined is an advanced republican program. The Communist Party will make a united front with the nationalist movement on this basis."

He also warned that though "attempts to organise a legal communist party are tolerated by our rulers, we must not have any illusions on this score. We must be prepared for attack any moment and organise the party in such a way that an attack on legality will not destroy the party. In other words, an illegal organisation should be built up side by side with the legal apparatus."

In this letter there is a reference to a press (printing machine) being sent which was to be used for issuing the party organ from India. The press did arrive in Pondicherry but did not, for some reasons, come into the hands of the party. This letter was enclosed in another letter dated 31 May 1926, which was signed by 'C' (Clemens Dutt). This letter enquires why the party office is shifted to Delhi from Bombay, where it was first set up after the Kanpur conference. Enquiry is also made about Ghate, who was the elected secretary together with Bagerhatta.

Next two letters are dated 2 and 29 September 1926. The first is signed by "Indian comrades abroad" and the second by "Muhammad Ali". In the first there is a reference to "national communism" being sent, a reference to Gauhar Rahaman and Majid who were just released from

prison after doing their term in the Peshawar conspiracy case. In the second there is a reference to "a friend" Campbell "who is to address your coming conference".

This brings us to the covering letter dated 13 October 1926 and the document "How to Organise Workingclass Party". In the covering letter there is again a reference to the "party conference which will meet in the middle of November" (1926). These facts are confirmed by the testimony of Muzaffar Ahmad who tells us that after the Kanpur conference, "The party office was then removed to Bombay and subsequently to Delhi. It was Janakiprasad (Bagerhatta) who persuaded Ghate to agree to the latter arrangement. . ."³² He also tells us that "Janakiprasad convened the second Communist Party conference in Delhi. Subsequently he changed the venue to Lahore. Even then I and some other comrades intended somehow to get the conference through in Lahore. In fact I did not have much enthusiasm for calling an open conference of the Communist Party."³³

Roy knew already of this proposed conference. As we see from the abovementioned letters, Roy was at that time (i.e. in 1926 and in 1927) functioning through the foreign bureau, consisting of himself, Muhammad Ali and Clemens Dutt, from Paris. The *Masses of India*, the monthly organ, which was probably printed in Berlin, was being dispatched to India through a French port to Pondicherry. The persons who were receiving the material and handling its dispatch to Bombay, Delhi and Calcutta were R. C. L. Sharma in Pondicherry and Krishnaswamy Iyengar in Madras. This system was functioning since 1924. Muhammad Ali Sepassi came to Pondicherry in 1924.³⁴ In 1926-27, Krishnaswamy Iyengar³⁵ who was a member of the CEC elected at the Kanpur conference was operating the sys-

32. *Myself and the CPI*, p 438.

33. *Ibid*, p 439.

34. *Documents*, Vol 2, p 462.

35. Cf *Ibid*, p 667. It has not been possible to trace the identity of Krishnaswamy Iyengar or to find out what happened to him in subsequent years.—G.A.

tem for receipt of letters from abroad and he was in touch with Ghate in Bombay and possibly Muzaffar Ahmad in Calcutta.

Roy wanted this proposed second communist conference to be converted into a meeting of communists "to launch a broad workingclass party, say the workers' and peasants' party". This is what he is saying in the covering letter dated 13 October and the document "How to Organise a Workingclass Party?" sent with the same is to be issued as a manifesto by the meeting. He makes it quite clear that the meeting is for organising an open forum of the Communist Party, i.e. the workers' and peasants' party, and not the people's party. He points out: "They are two entirely different things. One is a veiled communist party while the other is a revolutionary-nationalist party." The document included with this covering letter shows how to go ahead to organise such a workingclass party which is "communist except in name". "This has been done", he says, "because in our opinion (supported by leading international comrades) that it would be wiser not to call our party a communist party."

To begin with the document first polemises with the proposal and efforts of Bepinchandra Pal and Lala Lajpat Rai to form a "labour party" in India. Roy here points out that the Indian national-bourgeois politicians wanted to confine the spontaneously rising workingclass movement in the framework of "economic reformism". Their purpose was twofold—firstly, to keep the rising workingclass movement away from class-consciousness and the principle of class struggle, and secondly, to keep it away from politics. The document points out how a genuine working class party will have a maximum program and a minimum program for the immediate present. The program of the workingclass party is the program of socialism, i.e. for the abolition of the capitalist system and for the establishment of socialist society. "But the road to socialism passes through successive stages of social development." "India today", says the document, "is engaged in the revolutionary struggle for democratic freedom. This will be realised through the overthrow of foreign domination and the li-

quidation of medieval socioeconomic institutions." Then it proceeds to give the program of national independence which we have quoted earlier. Outlining concrete tasks, the document lays stress on "Party members penetrating into existing trade unions and peasant organisations" and converting them into "fighting organs of the toiling masses". As we see from the constitution of the Bengal Peasants' & Workers' Party (February 1926), the comrades in India had already started implementing the ideas into practice in a small way.

The last document in the section is an article in the *Masses of India*, December 1926, entitled "Program of the Workingclass Party". The article criticises the article by Nareshchandra Sengupta, the president of the Bengal Peasants' and Workers' Party, which had appeared in the issue of *Ganavani* dated 12 August 1926. Sengupta correctly emphasises that the noncooperation movement collapsed because it was not led by organised mass energy and emphasises the supreme necessity of organising the leftwing masses. He commits two mistakes. Firstly, he does not stress the militant class struggle aspect of organising the workers and peasants and secondly, he shows a typical moderate congressman's vacillation about quitting the so-called commonwealth or cutting the imperial connections.

We can draw certain conclusions from the documents produced in this section and from this correspondence of Indian communists abroad in 1926 quoted here:

Firstly, the All-Bengal Peasants' and Workers' Party, which was the precursor of workers' and peasants' parties that emerged later in different provinces, was not the people's party of M. N. Roy's conception. It was the open forum through which the Communist Party of India sought to function, in the conditions of repression obtaining in India then.

Secondly, it was seeking to make a breakthrough to mass activities, developing the struggles of the workers and peasants for their urgent demands and building the class organisations.

Thirdly, it came forward rejecting both the onesided emphasis on nonviolence and the path of individual terrorism and projected a plan of independence struggle as a direct resistance action in the form of countrywide general strike and a no-tax, no-rent campaign through which alone it said it would be possible to dislodge foreign imperialist rule. It put forward a concrete program of anti-imperialist, antifeudal socioeconomic changes of democratic freedom.

By not precluding its members from joining the National Congress or the Swaraj Party and by stressing the need for cooperation with all parties having similar objectives, it was clearly projecting a policy of working inside the Indian National Congress and of building a left, i.e. a national-revolutionary wing therein. Actually a people's party of Roy's conception i.e. a broad open party, seeking to rally all national-revolutionary elements, but projected as a body parallel and rival to the Indian National Congress, was never formed in India. The workers' and peasants' parties which came into existence in other provinces in 1927 and 1928 and met in all-India workers' and peasants' conference in December 1928 in Calcutta, played a dual role. On the one hand they pioneered the building of class-conscious organisation and movement of workers and peasants—the red flag movement—and began building a national-revolutionary left wing inside the national movement.

VI

THE AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION OF INDIA

The two articles included in this section put forward the Indian communists' analyses of the contemporary policy moves of British imperialism regarding Indian agriculture and peasantry. The appointment of the royal agricultural commission in 1926 was the subject of considerable discussion in the Indian press, especially after its personnel arrived in India on 31 March 1926. It toured round India

in 1926 and produced a voluminous report in 1928. Together with the so-called new industrial policy of British government and the Montford reforms, the appointment of the agricultural commission was a part of the imperialist offensive against the mass upsurge of workers, peasants and national struggles of the post-first-world-war period. The author of the first article (Document 15), G. A. K. Luhani is basing himself on the view of the postwar industrialisation of India put forward by Roy, which we have discussed earlier. Luhani says that the imperialists have appointed the commission with a view to increase the "power (of the peasantry) of absorbing the products of new industrialisation" and adds that it is not "a philanthropic gesture for the unique benefit of the peasants". He correctly points out that "the question of land tenure is expressly left out of the agenda of the commission". It is well known that though the terms of reference of the commission were "to make recommendations for the improvement of agriculture and to promote the welfare and prosperity of the rural population", they also expressly laid down that, "it will not be within the scope of the commission's duties to make recommendations regarding the existing system of land ownership and tenancy or of assessment of land revenue and irrigation charges."³⁶ The author of this article, Gulam Aulia Khan Luhani is already mentioned in the two earlier volumes. It will be remembered that Luhani began his work by organising Indian seamen in London under the auspices of the Workers' Welfare League of India (1919). He later figured in the Indian revolutionaries' conference in Moscow (1921) where he coauthored with Virendranath Chattopadhyaya a thesis on the Indian situation submitted to the Communist International. At the time of writing this article (1926) he was in Paris, working in Roy's organisation for the clandestine dispatch of the *Masses* to India. Luhani was present at the sixth congress of the Comintern where he dissociated himself from the "decolonisation theory".³⁷

36. R. Palme Dutt, *India Today*, 1970, pp 200-1.

37. Cf *Inprecor*, Vol 8, No 2, 21 November 1928.

The second article (Document 16) on the "Punjab Moneylenders' Bill" focuses the attention on the harrowing impoverishment of the peasantry under the usurious operations of the moneylenders. Most of the statistics presented in this article appear to be taken from the book *Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt* by M. L. Darling which was published in 1925 and attracted considerable attention in those days.³⁸ The imperialist measures like the Punjab land alienation act (1904) and the Punjab moneylenders' bill sought to protect the peasant from being evicted but it did not save him from the moneylender's greed. These measures as the article points out kept "him alive in order to work for the moneylenders, landlords and the government". The article also points out how the representatives of hindu moneylenders in the central legislature opposed the bill and even a responsivist stalwart like Lala Lajpat Rai called upon the swarajists to fight the coming elections on the issue of opposing the bill.

VII

CONGRESS WALKOUT AND THE GENERAL ELECTION

The last two sections deal with the two outstanding events at the end of 1926, viz the general election which took place in the end of November 1926 and the Gauhati session of the Indian National Congress. The general election of 1926 was the third under the Montford reforms introduced in 1919 and the results were declared some three weeks before the Gauhati session of the Congress. It is necessary to recall here that at the Kanpur session (December 1925) the responsive cooperators finally left the Congress. The session also adopted the Swaraj Party program as its own and reiterated the national demand, put through the legislative assembly by the swarajist members on 18 February 1924. The congress working committee which met soon after the Kanpur session decided that the forthcoming election be fought on the basis of the

38. Cf *India Today*, pp 252-53.

program and the national demand adopted at the session. Later, in October 1926, the Congress issued its manifesto for the election.³⁹

The manifesto, in its preamble, gives a resume of decisions of the Congress since the Kanpur session and in particular stresses the *six points* of its program and policy. The first point is that there will be no acceptance of office by the Congress until there is a satisfactory response from the government to the national demand. Points 2, 3 and 4, lay down directives for congressmen to be elected to the central assembly and the provincial councils as to their work, in such matters as voting against the budget, etc. and thus bringing them under the discipline of the congress committees at the respective levels, ending the swarajist autonomy once and for all. Points 5 and 6 give expression to the policy of class-collaboration and of the rejection of class struggle which the Congress was following then in the context of the emerging workers' and peasants' struggle. Thus, in point 5, the Congress supports the demand of the tenants for fixity of tenure, but with the proviso, "with due regard to the rights of the zamindar" which can only work as a pressure on the tenant to submit to the zamindar. Similarly "protection to rights of labour" in point 6 is again subject to the proviso of 'adjusting' relations between capitalists and labour, between landlords and tenants. This was not a support to workingclass struggles but a curb on them, which was in practice the policy of the Congress then.

But in the election of 1926, the Congress was not yet directly confronted with the question of workers and peasants and their struggle. Firstly, because under the Montford reforms, the overwhelming majority of the people, including of course the workers and peasants, had no vote. Secondly, because workers' and peasants' parties had not yet emerged as a mass force. The main confrontation which the Congress had to face in the election was on the issue of cooperation or noncooperation with the imperial-

39. For full text see *Indian Quarterly Register*, 1926, Vol 2, pp 17-23.

ist government. It was a confrontation with the Responsivist Cooperators' Party and with the Independent Congress Party, which were formed by those who had defected from the parent body on that issue. In the congress election manifesto there is a significant passage dealing with these parties without naming them which deserves to be quoted in full:

"There can be no comparison between these and the Swaraj Party which began as a highly organised party within the Congress with a bold fighting program. The wisdom of the great experiment inaugurated by the Swaraj Party has been demonstrated by the resolution of the Kanpur congress directing the continuance of the experiment. The consequent absorption of the Swaraj Party in the Congress has ensured the emergence of far more favourable conditions than those that prevailed in the last councils. It constitutes a further advance in the direction of organising more completely the will of the nation to achieve full responsible government and of bringing the legislatures under the steady control of the great national organisation."

The quotation is also important because it is a clear official confirmation of the fact that the Swaraj Party had merged in the Congress long before October 1926, when this manifesto was published. It appears the point was not so clearly understood as we see from the articles from the *Masses* reproduced in this section and in the next. This was probably because the contemporary daily press continued to use the name Swaraj Party while reporting the election. The *Indian Quarterly Register* (1926, vol II) also uses the name Swaraj-Congress Party.

A number of national parties stood for the election. But they can be roughly divided into two groups. The Liberal Party, the National Party, the Responsivist Cooperators and the Independent Congress Party, together with the Muslim League, was the group which stood for cooperation with the British government. The Congress which stood alone in the second group fought the election single-handed on the slogan "against cooperation till the national demand was conceded". The results of the election have

been reported in the contemporary official publications as follows: "Excepting in Madras presidency, where they almost entirely swept the board, the Swaraj Party definitely lost ground . . . In *Madras*, they captured roughly half the seats and in *Bihar* and *Orissa* they held their ground. In *Bengal* and *Bombay*, they were left rather worse than before, while in the *Central Provinces* the swarajists find themselves very much weaker. In the *Punjab* and the *United Provinces*... they almost disappeared from the councils of these two provinces. In the legislative assembly... they had 40 out of a total of 104 elected members."⁴⁰

It is true that the Congress got comparatively less seats than in the last election (1923) because of the defection the responsivists, but the imperialists were deliberately playing down the performance of the Congress at the election. Actually the main issue in the election was cooperation vs noncooperation, and the Congress emerging as the largest single party was a political victory against the government. R. Mitra's nationalist *Indian Quarterly Register* appraised the election as "a considerable victory for the Congress" and added that in *Madras* and *Bengal* it was in a "strong position" while in other provinces it was "the largest party". Similarly, Srinivas Iyengar in his presidential address to the Gauhati session of the Congress said that the election results were "a remarkable response to the Kanpur mandate" and added "the centre of gravity has definitely and finally shifted from the bureaucracy and its Indian supporters to the National Congress".

The two articles (Documents 17 & 18) that begin this section are from the *Masses* of July and August 1926. They analyse the political developments in the national movement in the Congress Party on the eve of the election and after the Krishnagar session of the Bengal provincial conference. The Swaraj Party with its preoccupation with the coming election is criticised for its pseudoparliamentarism and for having turned its back on the oppressed 98 per cent. It is characterised as a political organ of the upper-classes which is betraying the interests of the peo-

40. *India in 1926-27*, pp 45-46.

ple. Attention is focused on the left wing inside the Swaraj Party which rejects council work and wants mass agitation etc. They are asked to go to the masses, particularly to the peasantry, take up their demands and in this way strive to become a revolutionary people's party leading the battle for freedom.

The first article, "Nationalism and Class Struggle" written as a critique of the presidential address of the swarajist leader Sasmal at the Krishnagar conference stressed the point that the Swaraj Party, particularly its left wing must break with the Indian capitalists "who were preparing for a bargain with British imperialism" and turn to the toiling masses and to "a revolutionary-democratic theory". It commends China's "united anti-imperialist struggle under Sun Yat-sen" and quotes Lenin's characterisation of the same.

The second article "Crystallisation of the Left Wing", written in the context of the leftwing karmisangha conference at Krishnagar, calls upon the middle class, which is revolting, not to follow in the wake of the bourgeoisie but to link up with the revolt of the other exploited and expropriated class—the working class. The karmisangha conference at Krishnagar was not just an expression of factional struggle at the Bengal provincial conference, but also reflected the revolt of the left wing inside the same.

The next two articles in this section (Documents 19 & 20), one from the *Masses* and the other from the *Inprecor*, both published in December 1926, were written when the election campaign was proceeding but before the election results were declared. The first is a topical comment on two election manifestos, one by a liberal and the other by a swarajist, reported probably contemporarily in the daily press. The second, "Election in India" by M. N. Roy, is a political analyses of the Swaraj Party on the eve of the election. This article focuses the attention on the differentiation in the Swaraj Party, between the "bourgeois right wing" and "the marked revolutionary left wing crystallising among the rank and file". It projects the National Congress as "a loose organisation" of the unfranchised masses which the bourgeois right wing of the Swa-

raj Party is seeking to win for its view. Assessing the situation on the eve of the Gauhati session of the Congress, the article concludes that while it will not be possible for the bourgeois leaders to dominate the entire nationalist movement, the left wing will certainly shake their position. But to overthrow the compromising bourgeois leadership successfully "they (the left wing) will have to come into closer contact with the proletariat and peasantry".

On the same subject, Clemens Dutt, who was as we will see later, a member of the foreign bureau of the CPI together with M. N. Roy and Muhommad Ali (Sepassi), wrote an article in the *Labour Monthly* of December 1926, entitled "Indian Nationalism and the Elections". It is being reproduced here (Document 21). Written for the British workingclass reader, it explains in detail the utterly narrow character of the electorate under the Montford scheme and gives the political background of the election. Focusing the attention on the differentiation inside the National Congress, the article forecasts that after the election, "the coming session of the National Congress at Gauhati... will witness a determined effort on the part of the right wing to commit the Congress to a policy of liberalism". Stating that the rank and file of the Congress is "opposed to the surrender policy of the leaders", it calls upon the left wing to "rally itself around the demand for a free democratic republic".

Clemens Dutt states that the workers and peasants of India will find their allies in the camp of the international workingclass movement fighting the common enemy, imperialism. This is correct, but his prognostication that after the big bourgeoisie the middle bourgeoisie also would forsake the national revolutionary struggle and find its allies in the imperialist camp, was not so. It was in line with the same incorrect estimation of the role of the national bourgeoisie in India vis-a-vis imperialism which we have discussed earlier in this introduction. Giving a class analysis of the contemporary national parties, Clemens Dutt has in this article identified the Liberal Party and the National Party with the big bourgeoisie, the Responsive Cooperators and the Independent Congress Party with the

middle bourgeoisie, and the Swaraj Party with the petty bourgeoisie. On the issue of office acceptance, as we have seen, the first four parties stood for cooperation while the Swaraj Party as a whole stood generally for noncooperation. Thus in the context of this analysis of contemporary politics the role of the big and middle bourgeoisie, as distinct from that of the petty bourgeoisie, as cooperators with imperialism appeared plausible. This differentiation on the issue of office acceptance was seen also in the Swaraj Party itself. Clemens Dutt wrote: "Swarajists (leadership) practise nothing but responsive cooperation but refuse to call it by that name" and he forecast that at the Gauhati session they would seek to modify their policy (in the direction of office acceptance). The rank and file and the left wing of the Swaraj Party and the Congress was called upon to "prevent another Sabarmati" (office acceptance stand) and to turn to the workers and peasants, to their struggles and organisation.

VIII

GAUHATI SESSION OF THE CONGRESS

The first document in this section is a political review (Document 22) written on the eve of the election and covers more or less the analysis given above (*Masses*, November 1926). Taking note of the disintegration in the Swaraj Party which had taken place since the Kanpur session of the Congress and particularly after the formation of the electoral bloc of the responsivists and Independent Congress Party with the liberals, the article cautiously states that the swarajists will be "unable to achieve now the success (in the election) which they failed to achieve before the split had taken place". Whatever the results of the election, it points out, there will be a strong rally of compromisers at Gauhati and calls for a united struggle of the left wing, coming forward with a clear alternative policy. It draws attention to the revolutionary developments in China which were then beginning

to be reflected in the Indian press. It points out that "the lesson to be learnt from the Chinese revolution" was the "uniting all revolutionary-nationalists in the struggle against foreign imperialism" and that "the same thing can be done by the Indian nationalist movement". In the same issue of the *Masses* under the column "Point of View of the Masses" there is another reference to the revolution in China. Countering the British imperialist propaganda that the Soviet Union "had ambitions in India, Afghanistan and other Asiatic countries", the paper pointed out that the workers' and peasants' republic of Russia certainly wished success to the freedom struggle of these countries, which was spearheaded against British imperialism. The article said "the glorious revolution in China would rank second only to the great Russian revolution and that no one could be more interested in the success of the Chinese nationalists than the people of India; Indian nationalists should make common cause with the Chinese movement and should spread the facts and point the lesson of the Chinese revolution".

This was already happening. The Patna session of the AICC (22-23 September 1925) had passed a resolution expressing sympathy with the Chinese people in their struggle against alien domination and "protested against the dispatch of Indian soldiers by the government of India to suppress the Chinese national movement for freedom". The British were making no secret of it. Their organ the *Statesman* of Calcutta had openly boasted a year later: "We have now 25,000 troops in China, of these India has supplied two battalions from the British garrisons in India. The bulk had to be drawn from the expeditionary troops retained at home, and clearly had they been in India they could have been dispatched to China more quickly and more economically."⁴¹

In 1926 there were reports that the British imperialists in China were using "a large body of Indians as occupation troops and police in order to suppress the local population". A report in *Inprecor* said further:

41. Quoted in *Labour Monthly*, September 1925, p 537.

"But these Indian police are now being infected by the strong revolutionary ferment within the Chinese population and by the latter's fight against the imperialists. When in the past year (1924-25?) the great strike broke out in Hongkong and in Canton, many of the Indian police left their post and betook to Canton. Many of the Indian police who remained behind were killed by the English on suspicion of being revolutionary-minded...

"Since last year there existed in Canton a union of oppressed peoples in which Chinese, Indians and Annamites—all joined. Indians have already accomplished considerable practical work."⁴²

Whether Indian national-revolutionary propaganda literature was reaching the British-Indian police or soldiers posted in China is not known. But British intelligence men spying on Indian revolutionaries abroad reported that *Hindustan Ghadr*, published in San Francisco and which had "become noticeably communistic in tone", in its issue of March 1926, drew attention to the "union of the oppressed peoples of the east" with its headquarters in Canton. The article in the journal stressing the necessity for such an organisation among the eastern peoples, "called upon sikhs not to join the Indian army nor to assist as slaves, enslaving other oppressed peoples".⁴³

The same source also reported that a "British Labour Council for Chinese Freedom" sent a message addressed to the president, Indian National Congress, Gauhati, which said: "We appeal to the Indian National Congress also to support the claims of nationalist China and protest against any warlike measures against China and against using India as base for operation. So you are responsible for preserving the good name of India. We hope you will insist on the withdrawal of all Indian troops and police and volunteers of Indian nationality from China."⁴⁴

The next document is a manifesto⁴⁵ addressed to the All-

42. *Inprecor*, 22 July 1926, p 896.

43. D. Petrie, *Communism in India*, p 212.

44. *Ibid*, p 214.

45. Muzaffar Ahmad in his statement to the court in Meerut case says: "The party got the Gauhati manifesto printed in London

India National Congress, Gauhati session, by the Communist Party of India (Document 23). The distribution of this pamphlet at the session was reported in the daily press that is why one finds the following reference to it in the write up on Gauhati session in the *Indian Annual Register*: "Just before the Congress met a long manifesto addressed to the Congress purporting to have been printed at Dorrit Press, Lake Street, London, was distributed by a swami,⁴⁶ advocating the formation of a people's party, such as would fight for a socialist program of land, bread and education" and for an "eight-hour day and a minimum living wage".⁴⁷ It was not a socialist program which the manifesto put forward. It demanded "freedom, complete and unconditional". It must be in the form of a "republican state based on advanced democratic principles". National assembly elected by adult suffrage was to be the supreme organ of the people.

The manifesto is carefully drafted, the main analysis is the same as in the other articles. The "people's party" is not projected as a rival platform to the National Congress. The stress is on the point that the National Congress must become a party of the people and it is to lead the struggle for national liberation.

The next document "End of Swarajism" from the *Masses* of January 1927 (Document 24), also written before the Congress had assembled, makes the point clear.

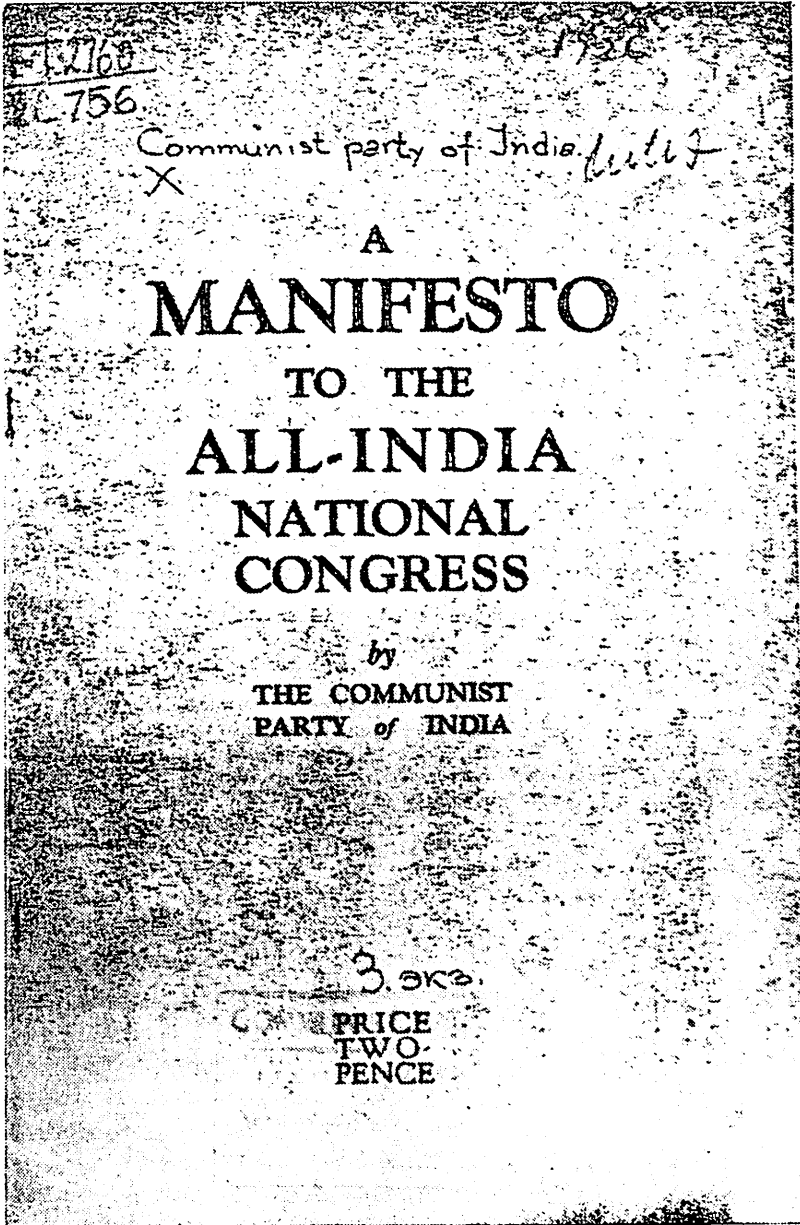
In "The Indian National Congress" by M. N. Roy (Document 25) and "The Gauhati Congress" (Document 26), the congress session is reviewed. The session is characterised as "uneventful" in which no decisive step is taken, one of

through our comrades residing there because of the trouble we had with the manifesto of May 1926 on the hindu-muslim problem" (p 500 of the printed statements of the accused).

As distinct from the earlier manifestos, viz those addressed to Ahmedabad session (1921), to Gaya session (1922) and to Belgaum session (1924) this manifesto was signed by the Communist Party of India (see also *Myself and the CPI* by Muzaffar Ahmad, p 493).

46. The 'swami' mentioned here was probably Swami Kumaranand who was present at Gauhati and later joined the party.

47. *Indian Annual Register*, 1926, Vol 2, p 281.



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Communist party of India
X *[Signature]*

A
MANIFESTO
 TO THE
ALL-INDIA
NATIONAL
CONGRESS

by
THE COMMUNIST
PARTY of INDIA

3.000.

PRICE
TWO
PENCE

the policy of "wait and see". The *Masses* and M. N. Roy expected the leadership of the National Congress to go in straight for "office acceptance" and for "cooperation". This did not happen. The six-point resolution on "work in councils" stated clearly: "No office acceptance till national demand was accepted." Further, "the national demand" was further clarified by the president Srinivas Iyengar in the address by stating that "No scheme of selfgovernment will be acceptable which denies full control of civil service, the military, naval and air forces and political relations with the Indian states and which refuses India dominion status..." The *Masses* quotes this as an expression of an irreconcilable contradiction between the Indian national movement and imperialism which can only be solved by "mass revolution". At the same time, the *Masses* points out that the left wing brought in a resolution for a change of creed of the Congress to "complete independence" which was heavily defeated. The articles point out that at the session, there was marked differentiation in the ranks of the National Congress and that a left wing was emerging with a shift towards a national-revolutionary program.

It is necessary to record certain leftwing developments at the Gauhati session before we come to the last document on the political sufferers' conference, which was an organised expression of the left at the session. Firstly, there was the message from Shapurji Saklatvala, Communist MP in British parliament. The message read out in the session said:

"In spirit with you. Accept greetings earnestly wishing your deliberations to be worthy of men and women who value mass liberty above political expediency, who realise that tactical speeches in parliamentary institutions are only a passing consolation for return for economic burdens and national serfdom. How long before adopting Andhra's honest logical resolution? Will Bombay sentimentalism prevail again to sacrifice national freedom and honour to the fetish forming a voting combination inside the councils. I stand alone in a parliament of 615 conservative, liberal and labour imperialists, yet I do not surrender to artificial political combinations. The voice of workers

and peasants outside the councils is your strength. Organise, organise, organise them till they lead themselves and your real emancipation as they are now doing in China where political councillors and opportunist mandarins are favouring foreign imperialist masters and are openly fighting Chinese workers and peasants though without hope. Wish success to your deliberations. Freedom is the strength of our motherland which I hope soon to visit.”⁴⁸

In this meaningful message, Saklatvala calls upon the congress session not to go in for office acceptance. His call is for organising workers and peasants and to follow the example of China.

The second development was the appearance at the session of Sardar Gurdit Singh, the hero of the historic *Komagatamaru* venture, who was coming before the public after years of suffering and underground life. He spoke of the survivors of that tragedy, of their sufferings in long years of jail and outside, and pleaded for support and relief for these patriots. While he was speaking there was some commotion which was misunderstood by the Punjab delegates as opposition and they walked out. At the session there was a wide leftist sympathy for the cause which the survivors and sufferers of the *Komagatamaru* episode represented. The misunderstanding was cleared with the intervention of the president and the session passed resolutions supporting the cause of the political sufferers of Punjab.

Thirdly, there were two delegates at the Gauhati session who were publicly known as communists, viz K. N. Joglekar and R. S. Nimbkar, who were members of the central executive of the CPI elected at the Kanpur conference.⁴⁹ In his reminiscences Joglekar says that he was a member of the AICC and gives the following brief account of his participation in the session: “In consultation with Comrade Donald Campbell, a resolution on labour demands was sent to the congress expressing the viewpoint that the Indian National Congress should sponsor and sup-

48. Ibid, pp 337-38.

49. *Documents*, Vol 2, p 667.

port the class struggle of the workers and peasants in India against the employers and landlords. It was not accepted by the congress officials." At the session Joglekar moved an amendment to the official resolution: "In all disputes between the peasantry and the landlords, the Congress should support the peasantry". The amendment was supported by Babasaheb Paranjpe of Yeotmal, a peasant leader of those days and a Tilakite. When the amendment was passed in the subjects committee of the congress, it created a furore in the high command. Srinivas Iyengar, the president of the congress, adjourned the meeting and in the next morning session prevailed upon Mahatma Gandhi to intervene to get the resolution reopened and rescinded."

D. Campbell, i.e. Donald Campbell, referred to was actually George Allison, an important member of the CPGB and a popular coalminers' leader of Great Britain. He arrived in Bombay from Marseilles on 30 April 1926. British Indian police did not know his identity till January 1927. He was sent out to help bring into existence a militant trade-union movement in India. In a letter dated November 1926 and addressed to Indian comrades, the foreign bureau of the CPI says "I hope you are already informed about Campbell... His main task is to help the development of the left wing inside the TUC. He has been advised to keep out of party politics except in an advisory capacity where necessary. Some other comrade especially charged with this task will meet you soon if he has not done so already."⁵⁰ Muzaffar Ahmad also confirms that while in Lahore in December 1926 he received a letter from Muhammad Ali stating that "Allison was an important member of the CPGB".⁵¹ The Meerut Record also contains a letter dated 28 November 1926 sent by "Campbell" from Calcutta to Joglekar in Bombay, which contains "draft resolutions to be presented to AICC and to the National Congress".⁵² This contains a resolution about the

50. Meerut Record, D 371.

51. *Myself and the CPI*, p 461.

52. Meerut Record, P 1144.

organisation of workers and peasants which Joglekar says was moved as an amendment to the official resolution at Gauhati. This resolution was entitled "Work in the Country" and contained a para which said: "Organisation of labour, both industrial and agricultural, the adjustment of relations between employers and workmen and between landlords and tenants and the general advancement of the national, economic, industrial interests of the country."⁵³ The amendment which he moved to this resolution was rejected in the subjects committee and did not come up before the open session. What is recorded in the official report of the Gauhati session are the amendments moved by K. N. Joglekar and R. S. Nimbkar to the khaddar franchise resolution which were rejected. The session also "appointed Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru as its representative to the Congress of the Oppressed Nations which will be held on 20 January next".

The most outstanding leftwing development at the session was, of course, the political sufferers' conference, presided over by the revolutionary Dr Bhupendranath Dutta. The last document (Document 27) is a review of this conference and the speech of its president. It will be remembered that Dr B. N. Dutta was present at the Indian revolutionaries' conference in Moscow and that he met Lenin who asked him to study the agrarian question.⁵⁴ It will also be remembered that on the eve of his return, he met Madame Cama in Paris who asked him to organise the workers and peasants. Dr Dutta returned to Calcutta in April 1925. His presidential speech at the conference was perhaps his first public activity since his return.

This article from the *Masses* (February 1927) applauds the speech for stressing "the need for organising the masses on the basis of a socioeconomic program" and for emphasising "the necessity of bringing the mass movement in India into relation with the world proletarian movement against world imperialism". The article, however, criticises the speech for being "confined to generalities". In the text of the speech we find interesting concrete suggestions. Pro-

53. *Report of Indian National Congress, Gauhati, 1926*, p 130.

54. Cf. *Documents*, Vol 1.

posing a political school for political sufferers, where they will be trained in history, political science, theoretical and applied psychology, economics and civics, etc. he adds:

"After being trained in these arts and imbued with the psychology of the proletariat, they should go to the toiling masses and work amongst them. The field and factory workers and the toiling masses in general should be organised in labour unions. A detailed plan of it can be matured later on. In order to start a new movement amongst the broad masses of the people, a propaganda department has to be established. Books expressing new ideologies and an organ of the movement will have to be given out."⁵⁵

Dr Dutta made no reference to Marxism-Leninism or even to socialism in his speech. But his pointed stress on "new ideologies" and on organising the toiling masses and labour unions was enough to earn him the charge of making a communist speech. Among the political sufferers he made distinction between those who had suffered for their revolutionary political activities and those who went to jail in the noncooperation movement. Addressing the former, who formed the main core of the conference, he said: "Up to now Indian bourgeoisie was alone in the field seeking to wrest freedom from foreign masters. The new phase of asking the masses to join in politics has been ushered in. But all honour to those who have suffered for their revolutionary political activities and for ushering in the new phase in Indian politics."

A resolution passed at the conference gave a call to begin immediately organising field and factory workers and employees all over the country. By another resolution "the conference sends its greetings to the British proletariat and asks for their cooperation in the common cause of freedom from all kinds of exploitation".⁵⁶

The resolutions of this remarkable leftwing conference at Gauhati did not remain on paper. They became the precursors of a period of mass activity of workers and peasants based on class struggle, of the emergence of a new force in the national-liberation movement.

55. *Indian Annual Register*, 1926, Vol 2, p 380.

56. *Ibid.*, pp 376-78.

I. Sixth Session of AITUC

1. ALL-INDIA TRADE UNION CONGRESS

The sixth session of the All-India Trade Union Congress was held in Madras on 9-10 January. Over a hundred delegates were present, representing nearly seventy trade unions. In the absence of Rev C. F. Andrews, the congress was presided on by Mr V. V. Giri, LLB, the head of the Bengal-Nagpur Railway Union. In his address he reviewed the history of the chief trade unions in India and uttered a warning against strike action. He remarked:

"It must be remembered that to organise a strike unlimited resources in money and sincere workers to lead are absolutely necessary. The capitalists can generally wait for a comparatively longer time than the labourer and break a strike."

Mr Giri commented on the importance of organising agricultural labourers and commended the efforts made by some "enlightened youngmen" to form educational associations among the ryots. He pointed out:

"These organisations are not against the landed interests of the landlords in any form, and this should be made abundantly clear. If they are properly organised, they will form a happy medium in bringing about peace and harmony to both landlord and tenant."

These two extracts are significant of the tone of the congress. Even the capitalist newspaper, the *Bombay Chronicle*, in a leading article on the congress, pointed out the need for more energetic work on the part of leaders of Indian labourers in organising trade unions.

Following in the path of the representatives of Indian capitalism the congress passed a resolution demanding immediate granting of dominion status for India within the British empire. A resolution was passed for special representation of labour on legislative councils, but not apparently for universal suffrage or even the extension of the franchise.

Other resolutions called for (1) establishment of the 8-hour day, (2) unemployment and health insurance, (3) maternity benefits, (4) legal abolition of the system of fining workers, (5) establishment by law of arbitration and conciliation boards.

A special resolution dealt with the treatment of Indians in South Africa, including an appeal to the international labour movement to assist in preventing the union government from depriving Indians in Natal of their rights.

Messages of greetings were read from the British Trades Union Congress, the British Minority Movement, the Central Council of Russian Trade Unions and from the RILU, but the only British labour representatives present were Major Graham Pole, and councillor Mellan of Glasgow in an unofficial capacity.

Labour Monthly
March 1926

2. THE INDIAN TRADE UNION CONGRESS

M. N. ROY

The lockout in the cotton mills of Bombay ended in the beginning of December. The workers resisted the attack on wages for ten weeks. About 160,000 workers, including 30,000 women and 12,000 children, were involved in the struggle. The lockout was called off by the employers after the excise duty was abolished.

Cotton textile industry is the oldest Indian industry owned almost exclusively by native capital. The first cotton mill (power-driven) was built in 1875. Since then the industry has grown steadily in spite of the competition of Lancashire backed by the entire political resources of British imperialism. Over 30 per cent of the British export trade with India being in cotton goods, imperialist policy naturally was to obstruct the development in India of cotton spinning and weaving with the application of mechanical power. Every time revenue purposes obliged the British government of India to impose duty on the cotton goods imported, there rose an indignant protest from the textile magnates of Manchester. Finally, in the beginning of the present century, a 5 per cent import duty was agreed upon provided that a countervailing excise duty at the similar rate was levied upon the cotton textiles manufactured in the Indian mills. To demand the abolition of the excise duty on the cotton industry has since been an article of faith of Indian nationalism. After a few years it was reduced to 3.5 per cent.

The situation suddenly changed in consequence of the imperialist war. Britain found herself in a position where it was impossible for her to supply the Indian market. Japan was not slow to take advantage of that opportunity and invade what had so far been an English monopoly. To encourage the production of the Indian mills was the only means of keeping Japan out. There was another consideration—to secure the loyalty of the Indian bourgeoisie, the British government of India abandoned the policy of free

trade and increased the duty on imported cotton goods to 8 per cent. This economic concession was made to the Indian bourgeoisie in return for the latter's undertaking to help the raising of war loan of £100 million. The trade depression and the resulting budget deficit in the year following the postwar boom obliged the government of India to increase the import duty to 11 per cent. All this time the 3.5 per cent excise duty, however, remained in operation.

In the postwar boom period the Indian cotton industry became fabulously prosperous. Everything was favourable to it. Labour was as cheap as dirt and totally unorganised; the mills were built in cities surrounded by rich cotton belts; the market was equally near; and there was an effective tariff against foreign competition. The total capital of the mills in and around the city of Bombay is in round numbers 20,000,000 rupees (a rupee is equivalent to 33 cents approximately). The net profit derived from these mills in the years 1918-22 was 360,000,000 rupees. In that period of prosperity the wages rose slightly over 100 per cent in comparison with the prewar rate, while the rise in prices and rent was an average of 154 per cent.

Such an abnormal boom could not continue. Depression set in by the end of 1922. The year following showed a decline in the rate of profit. Wages were attacked and a 20 per cent reduction was forced in the spring of 1924. The workers resisted the capitalist offensive by declaring a general strike which lasted nearly three months. In the period of prosperity, instead of an increase in the wages, the employers had granted a yearly bonus of a month's wage. The payment of the bonus was discontinued towards the end of 1924. This meant practically another 8 per cent reduction of the wages. In June 1925 the owners declared their intention of closing down the mills unless the workers agreed to accept a further 20 per cent wage-cut. The owners were divided on the issue. Finally the demanded cut was reduced to 11.5 per cent. The enforcement of this last cut would reduce the wage almost to the prewar level while the prices remained over 100 per cent higher.

The capitalist cry was that the industry was ruined, because owing to the excise duty it could not compete with Japanese and English goods. Even in 1924 more than half the mills of Bombay paid 10 to 15 per cent dividend although all the mills taken together showed a total annual loss of 28,000,000 rupees. The saving on the wage bill in consequence of the projected 11.5 per cent cut would be equivalent to the amount paid in the excise duty. By their determination to lock out the 176,000 workers employed in the Bombay mills, the owners enlisted the support of the entire nationalist movement to the demand for immediate removal of the excise duty. The labour leaders (all humanitarian reformists and nationalist politicians) also supported the demand of Indian capital against British capital. They agreed with the employers that the industry was on the verge of ruin and that the inequitable impost should be abolished. They also endeavoured to induce the workers to understand the critical situation of the industry. But the capitalist attack was too barefaced. The workers refused to work on the reduced wages and 80 out of 82 mills of Bombay were closed in the middle of September throwing out in the streets 156,000 workers.

The Bombay lockout proved to be a landmark in the history of the Indian labour movement. For ten weeks over 150,000 workers stood as a man in their resistance, without a union fund to back them and without a revolutionary class leadership to guide them. In this bitter struggle they developed proletarian leadership. From the very beginning a strike committee composed mostly of workers came into existence and led the struggle to the end. The bourgeois "labour leaders" who had exercised such a pernicious influence over previous strikes and lockouts were obliged to remain in the background, requesting the imperialist government to intervene in favour of the workers, persuading the millowners to be kinder and administering relief with the help of the financial aid received from abroad. For the first time Indian workers were practically supported in their struggle by

the European labour organisation. This factor had a tremendous moral effect on the situation. Finally the workers won. In the beginning of December the mills were reopened and the workers resumed work at the old rate of wages. The employers abandoned their attack on wages because of the abolition of the excise duty.

The most important outcome of the Bombay lockout, however, was the organisation of the Union of Textile Workers. The textile workers of Bombay had been practically unorganised. The union existed only in name. A group of humanitarian intellectuals headed by N. M. Joshi functioned as the union, doing some insignificant welfare work and carrying on negotiations with the government and the millowners when occasion arose. The capital of the Bombay cotton industry being predominantly Indian, the nationalistically inclined humanitarian "labour leaders" did not think it prudent to push the work of organisation. The new union has grown out of the struggle with a purely proletarian character and with a class leadership. The 1924 strike was sabotaged by the bourgeois humanitarian leaders. Towards the end it was continued under the leadership of a number of workers. These proletarian leaders were dismissed soon after the strike was over. They organised into a club which functioned as a nucleus of propaganda. It gradually gathered around it the most advanced elements among the Bombay proletariat, although the depression that followed the collapse of the 1924 strike made any effective organisation work almost impossible. It was under the initiative of the worker's club that the strike committee was set up in the beginning of the last lockout. Soon after the lockout had been declared the club converted itself into the Union of the Cotton Mill Workers. In less than two months it enlisted 14,000 members. The restoration of wages encouraged the workers, consequently the union maintains its existence and tries to enlist members, taking advantage of the general enthusiasm prevailing among the workers. The old union is affiliated to the Trade

Union Congress and has for its secretary Jhabvala (bourgeois humanitarian) who is a member of the executive of the TUC.

It was on the morrow of these events in Bombay, the industrial heart of the country—that the Trade Union Congress met in Madras. It was naturally to be expected that the Trade Union Congress would draw valuable lessons from the struggle of the Bombay workers for the benefit and future guidance of the entire labour movement. They were disappointed, who expected it. As a matter of fact, such expectation was misplaced. All through the ten weeks of struggle, the Trade Union Congress remained passive, except for the relief activities of its secretary Joshi. Absolutely no propaganda and agitation had been carried on either before or during the lockout. To go on deputations to the millowners and the British governor was the sole contribution. The concrete and most important outcome of the struggle—the union—is practically opposed by the Trade Union Congress, since the old fake union which is its organ does not liquidate itself in view of the rise of a live proletarian organisation. There are several very serious outstanding issues connected with the Bombay lockout. These issues should be raised and agitation carried on on the basis of them in order to consolidate the position gained and marshal the proletariat for further demands. After two years of depression, a rising tide is clearly to be noticed in the Indian labour movement. The North-Western Railway strike (in the beginning of 1925) was the first indication. Although the strike was lost, it coincided with a series of demonstrations in which tens of thousands of workers participated, flying red flags with revolutionary slogans inscribed on them. As usual the Trade Union Congress was nowhere in evidence. Three of its leading lights were lurching with Oudeguest in Geneva and making speeches in London (imperial labour conference) when 40,000 striking railwaymen were demonstrating in India.

The deliberations of the Madras Trade Union Congress

(10 January) were not in the least affected by the two most important events of the labour movement during the preceding 12 months—the North-Western Railway strike (55,000 workers involved, lasting nearly two months) and the Bombay lockout. I am not mentioning here other minor but not unimportant events of the labour movement. The question of international affiliation, which was pigeon-holed in the previous congress to satisfy the nationalist leader C. R. Das, was not raised at all, although actions in connection with the Bombay lockout had brought that question nearer home. The ex-secretary, Chamanlal, according to his own statement, had told Oudeguest in Geneva (during the last conference of the International Labour Bureau) that the Indian Trade Union Congress would go neither to Amsterdam nor to Moscow because it had received invitations from both sides. The present general secretary, Joshi is however in favour of Amsterdam, and had been pressing for a decision to that effect for two years. A representative of the British Labour Party—Major Graham Pole was present at the Madras congress and warned the Indian labour movement against bolshevism.

The question of wages for the period of lockout still remains unsolved. The millowners have had their grievance (the excise duty) redressed. This victory of Indian capitalism has cost 156,000 workers ten weeks' wages. The first step toward the consolidation of the position gained by the Bombay workers and utilisation of the prevailing enthusiasm should be the agitation on the demand for the lockout pay. Then, the depression in the Bombay cotton industry will continue even after the abolition of the excise duty. Therefore it is to be expected that the attack on the wages may be renewed. The moment is propitious for preparing the workers organisationally to meet successfully any such eventual attack. These are two of the most outstanding issues which arise out of the Bombay lockout. The Trade Union Congress was blissfully oblivious of them.

In 1924 the Trade Union Congress went practically into voluntary liquidation to secure the patronage of the nationalist Swaraj Party. The swarajist leader, Das, broke up the annual session of the TU Congress and threatened to organise a new trade union congress under the patronage of the Swaraj Party if his will would not prevail in the existing body. The official leaders of the Trade Union Congress (who were all seeking political careers as swarajist members of the legislative bodies) were cowed by the fury of the swarajist leader. The left wing, which had put forward a demand to amend the constitution of the TUC so as to make it a proletarian body was shattered. It was as yet too weak organisationally and too immature politically to meet the situation. Nevertheless, when the congress met at Bombay in the beginning of 1925, it was revealed that the revolutionary current could not have been altogether choked. For the first time in its none too eventful career, the kind-hearted gentlemen, nationalist politicians and unscrupulous careerists constituting the Trade Union Congress found the presidential chair occupied by a railway employee, who to the great discomfiture of the respectable gathering talked about class struggle. The presidential address must have been positively stunning, because the congress was otherwise sterile. The congress dispersed evidently with the determination to hunt heresy. It was very smoothly done. Nothing more was heard of Thengdi, who had startled the country with his speech as the president of the Trade Union Congress in Bombay. According to the constitution, the president of the congress automatically becomes the chairman of the executive until the next congress. But by some mysterious means the worker Thengdi was replaced by the English christian missionary, Andrews, who had broken and sabotaged not a few strikes in his highly christian way. As if to wash away the black spot in its history, this year the Trade Union Congress met under the presidency of an apolitical lawyer.*

* V. V. Giri.

The accomplishment of the Madras Trade Union Congress was three resolutions. The first supported the bourgeois-nationalist demand for selfgovernment within the British empire; the second recommended the setting up of arbitration courts (by the government) to avert or to settle disputes between capital and labour; and the third demanded that there should be special workers' representatives on all the legislative bodies. Selfgovernment within the empire will mean the exploitation of the Indian working class jointly by native and imperialist capital. Even the revolutionary elements in the nationalist movement (intellectuals, petty bourgeoisie, etc) are against this political program of compromise between Indian capitalism and British imperialism. But the Trade Union Congress supports this program. This shows how much removed it is from the working class and how incapable it is of leading the Indian proletariat. To ask the brutally exploited Indian proletariat to pin its hope on an arbitration court is simply ridiculous and betrays an utter ignorance of the reality of the situation. Then parliamentarism in a country without a parliament is an imbecile imitation of the British Labour Party, which is the source of inspiration to the Indian Trade Union Congress, although some of its luminaries indulge in occasional outbursts against labour imperialism.

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3. THE TRADE UNION CONGRESS

M. N. ROY

"To live in contentment with an increasing degree of selfrespect and a fuller realisation of higher duties towards his country"—such is the ideal which the president of the

Trade Union Congress set up before the Indian worker. On the morrow of the Bombay lockout this ideal should have sounded out of tune had the Madras gathering been really representative of the Indian proletariat. While brutal exploitation is making the proletariat more and more conscious of their class interest, the "supreme organ of the Indian labour movement" preaches to the worker "higher duty towards his country". According to this ideal, the Bombay workers should have meekly accepted the wage-cut. Did not the owners argue that the cut was necessary for the welfare of the premier national industry? But the realities of life induced the workers to act rather on the urge of class interest than national interest. The Trade Union Congress, however, is so far removed from the struggle of the proletariat that the experience of such a momentous event as the Bombay lockout did not in the least reflect on its deliberation and policy.

The least knowledge of the situation makes it clear that the struggle of the Bombay workers against insatiable capitalist greed is not over. The president himself admitted that "the workers are still in danger of their wages being reduced by the millowners giving one lame excuse or other". As a matter of fact several mills have in the meanwhile been closed down. The Trade Union Congress did not say a word as to how the workers should meet the situation. "Hundred per cent organisation" was the only remedy prescribed. But hundred per cent organisation is a far cry. What should be done to meet the imminent capitalist offensive? Obviously it should be to rally the entire labour movement in support of the Bombay workers in case their wages will again be attacked, even after the capitalists have gained their point in the abolition of the excise duty. The most effective check to any further attack on the wages of the Bombay workers should be the preparation for a general strike all over the country. But such a revolutionary step cannot be taken by a Trade Union Congress which is against even partial economic strikes.

In reviewing the events of the past year the president

deplored the North-Western Railway strike which was defeated, in spite of the splendid solidarity of the workers, because the rest of the labour movement remained passive. While deploring the "unfortunate North-Western Railway strike" the president remarked with satisfaction that "the threatened strike on the BN Railway was happily averted by the efforts of the union and the All-India Railwaymen's Federation". The BN Railway strike, if not "happily averted", would have taken place about the same time as the NW Railway strike; thus it might have changed the entire position, and the NW Railway strike would be very likely to result fortunately. Instead of recognising and rectifying these mistakes, the Trade Union Congress congratulated itself upon its inglorious record.

The correct tactics in connection with the Bombay lock-out should be to lead the workers from the successful defensive to the offensive. The success in warding off the attack on wages has infused the workers with general enthusiasm and confidence in their strength. Further action must be undertaken to consolidate the position gained. A counteroffensive should be made. The demand for the payment of the wages for the lockout period should be put forward. But a Trade Union Congress that fraudulently testifies to the sympathy of the workers for the millowners and declares that "labour was with them in agitating for the removal of the excise duty" (president's speech) apparently considers that ten weeks' for 150,000 workers was a legitimate sacrifice for the "higher duties towards the country".

Reviewing the dispute in the Tata Works at Jamshedpur—a dispute sabotaged by the Trade Union Congress in connivance with the bourgeois-nationalist leaders—the president admitted that the company "went back on its agreement and dismissed a number of workers prominent" in the union. He also confessed that "the intervention of important leaders of the country was without appreciable success". The intervention was to avert a strike decided upon by the workers themselves. The arbitration committee,

on which sat Motilal Nehru and several other swarajist leaders, forgot the Jamshedpur workers as soon as the strike was averted. The swarajists cooperated with the government in passing the steel industries protection bill while the Tatas dismissed a number of workers, who had headed the strike movement. The president of the Trade Union Congress blinked over these incidents and expressed satisfaction that the situation at last had been eased by the "genius and personality of Mahatmaji". The Trade Union Congress acclaimed the settlement arrived at Jamshedpur under the patronage of the Mahatma. What was this settlement? The question of wages was not touched. The company recognised the union, reinstated its secretary to work, and undertook to collect subscriptions from the wages. This third condition more than compensates for the concessions made by the first two. The company will control the union fund. In consequence of this, the union officials will practically be the employees of the company. In this connection we may profitably recollect some of the remarks made by Gandhi when he came to settle the dispute at Jamshedpur. Addressing a workers' meeting he said, among other things of a similar nature: "I have come here as the friend of the Tatas. I hope that the relations between this great house and the labourers, who work under its care, will be of the friendliest character. They (capitalist and labourers) should be a great family living in unity and harmony. Capital will look not only to the material welfare but their moral welfare also. The capitalists are the trustees of the labouring masses under them. . . . I do hope you (workers) will serve the company faithfully and by the manner of working your union demonstrate to the world that you deserve the generous reconciliation agreed to by Mr Tata." The reconciliation brought about by the "genius and personality of Mahatmaji" and acclaimed by the Trade Union Congress was to deliver the workers to the moral and material trusteeship of labour. As custodian of the welfare of the workers who are fortunate to labour for them, the Tatas will use the fund deducted from the

wages in such propaganda as will teach the labourer to "serve the great house faithfully". The Trade Union Congress accepts this as the best arrangements to settle the dispute in the Tata Works.

Politically, the Trade Union Congress subscribed to the program of dominion status for India. Nothing could show more clearly that it did not represent the interest of the Indian proletariat. Dominion status is a political agreement between imperialist and native bourgeoisie at the expense of the Indian working class. The latter will be forced to produce wealth for the native bourgeoisie in addition to British imperialism. Under the patronage of the missionaries of British labour-imperialism, the Trade Union Congress resolved that the salvation of the Indian working class would be worked through parliamentarism—in a country without a parliament. A request was registered in favour of special electorates if the government would not widen the existing franchise. As if India is not already rent asunder in hostile camps in consequence of the pernicious system of special electorates introduced by the Montagu reforms. The incipient labour parliamentarians of India might begin by learning the ABC of democracy. The usual resolution about the formation of a labour party was also adopted. We have dealt with this matter in our last issue.

The shameful feature of the Madras Trade Union Congress was the omission to mention the moral and material aid received by the Bombay workers from the textile workers of the Soviet Union in the official acknowledgement of international support. Nor was the help received from the International Workers' Relief mentioned. Despicable cowardice!

"Point of View of the Masses"

The Masses of India

Fol 2, No 3, March 1926

4. POLITICAL ORGANISATION OF LABOUR IN INDIA

G. A. K. LUHANI

It is a welcome sign of the times that, in the aftermath of the decomposition of the nationalist revolutionary parties, a more than academic interest is being taken in the political organisation of labour in India. It is a testimony to the slow understanding by the Indian intelligentsia of the fact that labour, meaning thereby the masses of workers and peasants, holds in its hand the master-key to the solution of the problem of Indian freedom. After the successive debacles of gandhism and swarajism, it is indeed high time that the fact is recognised by the revolutionaries of India. But it seems, it is as yet too early to expect freedom from ideological confusion, even in the case of those in whom it does not proceed from the unconscious bias of class-interest or class-affiliation.

We remember the abortive attempt in the beginning of last year by Lala Lajpat Rai, and Messers Chamanlal and Joshi to form a labour party for India. Since then, Lala Lajpat Rai has drifted into the absorbing entanglements of hindu sanghatan movement, and has recently entered the legislative assembly as member of the eminent capitalist independent group. Nor do the others appear to have taken any further steps to renew the attempt at giving a political form to the increasing (class) consciousness of the workers of India. Dewan Chamanlal remains a pillar of the Swaraj Party and Joshi, a kind-hearted liberal, is horrified at the idea of class struggle. But other attempts have been made here and there. Recently there has come into existence on the flank of the orthodox swarajist position, a "Labour swaraj Party" in Bengal with an organ of its own called the *Langal* (The Plough). We do not know who form the rank-and-file of the party nor do we know what its program is (often there are political parties in India, whose membership does not extend beyond their leaders, and which have not

very often a program to call their own). But the name—Labour Swaraj—is significant.

On the otherside of India in Bombay a Socialist Party has been trying for some time for a foothold, if indeed it has not taken a false step into oblivion by this time. In the industrial "province of Bombay socialism" would be a somewhat belated flower, but a flower very racy of the soil.

Apart from these efforts, the proletarian party of the near future, so much in the mind of the Indian "labour leaders", is consistently spoken as a "labour party on the British model". This scheme has been promoted by a number of representatives of the British Labour Party who visited India recently. Of this number Mr Oswald Mosley, labour MP, was the pioneer; he was followed by Graham Pole and Dr Rutherford. They did not go with an official mandate from the Labour Party, their mandate may be described as a "moral" one. Their efforts in India were seconded from England by utterances of Colonel Wedgwood, ex-minister of the MacDonalld cabinet, by resolutions of the Labour Party conference and the Independent Labour Party. The missionaries of British social-democracy in India had an initial difficulty in the shape of the Indian policy of the MacDonalld ministry. They served up the stale but always curious apology that the British Labour Party was in office but not in power, when Mr MacDonalld swore hard that he was going to keep British imperialism intact whatever he might do with the capitalists at home, and when Lord Oliver sanctioned the infamous Bengal ordinance. If there were anything else than demagogic humbug in the profession of the British Labour Party to meet the very moderate demands of the swarajists, then Mr MacDonalld would have logically kept at least the status quo in India intact during his office, in waiting for the more favourable opportunity of a tenure of power. The actual policy followed by the MacDonalld ministry with regard to India

would be followed by any labour ministry, whether or not it combines office with power.

But the job of the labour MPs was a different one. If they toured India it was not only with the purpose of convincing the swarajists that dominion status is to be had for the asking from the British Labour Party "in power". What they wanted was to take a hand eventually in the political organisation of Indian labour. It sounds quite harmless and inoffensive, almost laudable. It was indeed as such that they presented their sudden preoccupation with the internal situation developing in India.

It was Major Graham Pole who took himself the most seriously. He spoke of establishing a permanent liaison between the British Labour Party and labour organisations in India. He promised persumably on behalf of his party to send organisers from England and to help in the launching of a labour party for India. In his further anxiety to provide for an appropriate ideology for such a party, he even suggested the formation in India of a branch of the Fabian Society; so that in the near future the ponderous opportunism of the socialist philosophy of Messrs Sidney Webb and Philip Snowden may keep company in India with the indigenous supineness of swarajism and swarajist labourism.

It is in the striking changes wrought in the relation between the British metropole and the Indian colony since the war that one finds the "categorical imperative" of the economic law which has pushed the British Labour Party out of its official isolation from the problems of Indian labour. The class-conscious British proletariat extending its hand to the workers of India is indeed an example of proletarian world unity for common fight against exploitation. But the class-conscious British proletariat working for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism is one thing, and the British Labour Party, led by Messrs Ramsay MacDonald, Thomas and others as a constituent of the imperialist political system at the metropole is quite another.

Now this imperialist system in its economic aspect has grown out of its primitive stage. If the attraction of raw materials to the metropole has been preeminent function of prewar imperialism, it is not so now. The classic relation of India to England as a reservoir of raw materials and a market for industrial products has ceased. India emerged from the shock of the war as a country on the way to rapid industrialisation, though that industrialisation is bound to appear in the beginning rather as industrial preparation of raw materials for export, than as manufacture of raw materials on the spot. But the one is only a step to the other. The home-market in India for the absorption of indigenous manufactures is being prepared by a system of "discriminate protectionism", while the basis of all intensive industrialism, namely, the iron industry, is being pushed forward by a system of generous bounties. The preponderating role in this industrial transformation is that of finance from the British metropole. Imperialism becomes thus more and more synonymous with "export of capital".

The effect of this export of capital will be enormous in the internal economy of England; it will be revolutionary in that of India. In any case here is a great change in the process of exploitation of labour in England and India in the interests of British capital. The unorganised labouring masses of India, thrown in the maelstrom of intensive industrialisation, will now be used to keep the industrial proletariat of England in its proper place, as a class of hapless wage-slaves. The transformation of India's raw materials into industrial products will now be increasingly done in India, instead of in factories of England. Not the entire industrial production of England will be susceptible to this change because India as a source of raw materials is one of several which England draws upon. Particular areas, namely, the centres of textile industry in Lancashire and Dundee will be the first to be affected by lower wages and unemployment.

In consequence of this, it becomes impossible for labour

politicians in England to retain their continued leadership of the British proletariat, more and more subject to the developing contradictions of capitalism. A political party of the exploited which sees in the process of exploitation not the sharpening of the class struggle leading ultimately to social revolution, but only a maladjustment of the relation between labour and capital destined to disappear by a series of "reforms" is the substantially exact definition of the British Labour Party. And such a party becomes untenable as a proletarian party in the postwar circumstances of capitalist development. To such a party and to its leaders, the tendency of British capital to absent itself from London, with its social consequences both in England and India, does not mean an extension of the field of revolutionary alliance of the British and Indian proletariat for the destruction of imperialism. It means to them an extension of the field for the application of their reformist tactics.

The India of the plantation coolie and the agricultural labourer could very well be left out of the operation of their "reformism". But the India of the industrial proletariat is a different matter. It introduces a terrible disequilibrium in the economy of the empire, it opens up new revolutionary possibilities. Now a revolution is the last thing that Mr Mosley and Major Graham Pole and their colleagues at home care for. They would do anything, call the British empire a commonwealth or a federation of "free nations", but they will not accept the possibility of revolution overthrowing the empire. Hence the call for a political organisation of Indian labour on the model of the British Labour Party. As in England so in India, they will attempt the tutoring of the working classes to a belief in a system of compromises and palliatives. The raising of wages and the shortening of working hours, beyond which the program of the British Labour Party hardly ever goes except momentary lapse into schemes for nationalising this or that industry—will become ends in themselves instead of means to the larger struggle against the whole system of exploitation. Organised Indian labour, demand-

ing higher wages and a better standard of life, will have the tendency of neutralising the effect, on industrial conditions in England, of the export of British capital to India. Thus by meeting the legitimate and initial demands of growing industrial proletariat in India, an Indian labour party inspired by British social-democracy will tend to stave off the day of the final reckoning with imperialism.

But such a political party cannot and does not meet the fundamental demands of a colonial proletariat striving for emancipation. The raising of wages, the shortening of working hours, the securing of better housing conditions—all these and much more in the daily life of the workers—are indeed parts of the fight of the proletariat against its exploiters. But they are not the whole fight; and much of these can be had by the purely industrial organisation of the proletariat in trade unions, of course seconded by a proletarian political party. A political party, by its definition, fights on the political plane which means it fights, puts itself in opposition to, the state—the state as the repository of the power of the exploiting and dominating class. A fight against the state is in the last analysis a fight for the seizure of political power. And the fight for political power as the revolutionary marshalling of the forces of the exploited millions is not in the program of the British Labour Party. We know that its highest “revolutionary” achievement up till now has been the capture of “office” and not “power”, that too with the silent sanction of the bourgeoisie. And Indian labour party with the same program will not even achieve office by any long chance. That we are on the eve of a revolutionary encounter in India, as in all other colonial countries, is beyond question, it is further proved by the very appearance of reformists on the scene, because reformism in its essence is counterrevolutionary and a counterrevolutionary tendency can logically appear only when the revolutionary tendency has clearly defined itself. Revolutionary tendency defined itself as early as 1921 when the Indian workers with their sure proletarian instinct

brought the noncooperation movement to its logical collision with the state by burning down at Chauri-Chaura the police station, the symbol of the power of the state. The Chinese workers with an equal sureness of instinct showed in Shanghai last year that the interval is very short indeed between the appearance of economic grievances and the gravitation of the masses towards a revolutionary encounter with the forces of oppression and exploitation. Twenty years ago in St Petersburg, before the tsar's winter palace the Russian workers on strike had shown the same instinct, when they had presented a political program and thus staged what Lenin called "the full dress-rehearsal of the revolution of 1917". Major Graham Pole was giving a futile warning against the overwhelming process of an inevitable historical development when, during his tour in India, he said "labour in India should be careful not to ally itself with communism, though it might be proclaimed that it was bound in its turn to domineer over the world".

The political party of Indian labour cannot then be of the type represented by the British Labour Party. Indian labour has to organise itself into a mass party of workers and peasants—a party which, while carrying on the day-to-day fight against the capitalist and the landlord, will adapt itself more and more as an instrument for the revolutionary overthrow of imperialist domination and class exploitation. The reformist illusion of "constitutional" advance will have no place in its tactics. But its tactics will take due note of the actual socioeconomic structure of India, from which it will be its task to detach whatever other elements of revolt there may be, and lead them to the inevitable clash against imperialism. The national bourgeoisie of India have abdicated the leadership of the struggle for political liberation. They have given up the fight against imperialism for imperious reasons of class-interest, and are now ready for "responsive cooperation" with it. But the economic processes of imperialism not only create an industrial proletariat out of the labouring

masses of India but also perpetually pauperise the middle classes. It is the historical role of the revolutionary political party of the Indian proletariat to lead all these forces to the battle for freedom. A labour party on the British model will not be such a party of the Indian proletariat.

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5. MESSAGES TO THE TRADE UNION CONGRESS

USSR CENTRAL COUNCIL OF TRADE UNIONS, MOSCOW:

USSR Central Council Trade Unions sends fraternal greetings to trade unions (in) India and their congress. USSR trade unions follow attentively heroic struggle of labouring masses in colonies for emancipation. Our sympathies are wholly and completely with your people who struggle against imperialist oppression and exploitation. National and social emancipation are closely linked and possible to achieve only by establishing united front of all workers and restoring international trade-union unity. Imperialism is still strong owing to exploitation (of) hundreds of millions of labourers in the east. Awakening of oppressed peoples means mortal blow to imperialism. Trade unions in USSR and England formed fraternal alliance to strive for creation of single international affiliating trade unions of all countries, all races, all continents. Advisory councils formed by trade unions of these two countries enjoy sympathies of workers (of the) whole world and we don't doubt it will evoke sympathies of All-India Trade Union Congress. USSR Central Council (of) Trade Unions is glad (to) establish direct connection with fraternal trade unions (in) India and hopes to see in (the)

USSR representative All India Trade Union Congress. Close relationship between trade unions (of) USSR and India serves vital interests of workers (of) both countries and we hope personally (to) express to your representatives sympathies of working class (of) USSR towards your country, towards the struggle (of) peoples (of) India for independence. Long live labouring masses (of) India! Long live one universal All-India Trade Union Congress! Long live Trade Union international!—Presidium USSR Central Council Trade Unions. DOGADOFF (*secretary*).

RED INTERNATIONAL OF LABOUR UNIONS, MOSCOW:

In the name (of) world revolutionary trade-union movement, Red International (of) Labour Unions sends heartiest greetings (to) your congress (and) wishes it every success in uniting wide masses of Indian toilers for national and social emancipation. Asia's economic development, her industrial growth and the powerful national labour movements of such countries (as) China and India where live almost half humanity is most important phenomenon of our time. Even conservative elements (of) European labour movement who not so long ago looked down upon toilers in colonies—their attitude being even that of exploiters—are beginning to understand the oneness of interests of workers in home countries and colonies. From its very inception (the) RILU broadcasted (the) slogan of (the) independence of colonies and establishment of fraternal relations between labour movement (of the) east and west, while International Federation of Trade Unions in Amsterdam during all years (of) its existence never once spoke in favour (of) freeing the oppressed people from imperialist exploitation. (The) Red International's steady work in uniting (the) workers (of) all countries into a single powerful organisation has borne fruit. The lack of unity and narrow national outlook of labour movement inherited from past is giving way to ever-growing urge towards international trade-union unity. Ever greater masses of organised workers the world over are becoming convinced

that only unifying workers (of) all countries—particularly (of the) orient and occident—lies the road to successful day-to-day struggle for their vital economic interests and to complete class and national freedom. The setting up of joint advisory committee by the trade unions (of) Britain and USSR furnishes ample proof of growing demand among broad masses for united front and unity. The establishment of connections between All-India Trade Union Congress and Red International (of) Labour Unions, with (the) unions (of) China, Korea, Mongolia, Indonesia, Persia, Egypt, Tunisia and other colonial and semicolonial countries in its ranks, would advance (the) cause (of) world trade-union unity in which western and eastern workers are equally interested. In (the) North-Western Railway strike and heroic (and) victorious Bombay textile strike (the) Indian workers displayed not only (the) will to fight, not only class endurance, but high degree (of) proletarian solidarity. (The) RILU expresses hope that your congress will display such proletarian solidarity likewise in (the) question (of) international trade-union unity and take initiative in establishing connections between labour movement of east and west. All success to (the) sixth All-India Trade Union Congress! Long live (the) alliance (of) oppressed peoples and classes of east and west! Forward to world trade-union unity!—Executive Bureau, Red International Labour Unions.
A. LOZOVSKY, *general secretary*.

Typed record of
AITUC session

II. The Hindu-Muslim Problem

6. THE CALCUTTA RIOT

M. N. ROY

The antagonism between the hindus and the muslims is an old phenomenon in the social life of India. This antagonism, which has its roots in the history of the country, has been fully exploited by British imperialism. It has always provided the basis for imperialist policy of "divide and rule". During the last two decades the religious conflict broke out into bloody riots on several occasions. In each case the hidden hand of the government was to be noticed behind the scene. Provocation acts on the part of the police were the immediate cause of such bloody riots. The latest one in Calcutta has been of an unusually acute nature.

In spite of the fact that hindu-muslim unity was one of the planks of the nationalist program, the bourgeois leaders have totally failed to solve the vexing problem. The reason of this deplorable failure is the inordinate importance given to religion in nationalist agitation. It is also due to the fact that the bourgeois-nationalist leaders only searched for a basis of compromise.

Before the British conquered India in the middle of the eighteenth century, the country had been ruled by

muslim invaders for nearly five hundred years. Although the muslim conquerors settled in India and practically severed all connection with their land of origin, they were always regarded more or less as aliens in the country. Religious antagonism and the consequent persecution was the order of the day in that period. A handful of British invaders were able so easily to conquer India, largely owing to the tacit connivance of the hindu majority of the population. The memory of the three centuries of muslim domination did not die easily among the hindus. The bogey of a new muslim invasion from the northwest was successfully held up by the British rulers to terrify the hindus into subjugation. On the other hand, the muslim minority was held in check by the fear that the disappearance of British protection would place the muslims under the revengeful tyranny of the hindu majority. The British rulers very successfully played upon the mutual fear and suspicion of the two communities. The policy would not have been so disastrously effective had these elements of fear and suspicion not had a traditional basis.

The muslim community constitutes a minority of the population, being in round numbers 70 million as against 200 million hindus. In its earlier stages (until the beginning of the world war) the nationalist movement was almost exclusively a hindu movement. After having overthrown the decayed muslim power with the help and connivance of the oppressed hindu majority, the British conquerors changed their policy. They pretended to be the protector of the muslim minority as against the possible dictatorship of the hindu majority. This pretension was backed up by certain favouritism towards the muslim intelligentsia who received preference over the hindus as regards state employment. This policy of favouritism kept the advanced elements of the muslim community away from the nationalist movement. Consequently, the latter became predominantly hindu and came under the influence of hindu religious ideology. This rendered the situation still worse. It enabled imperialism to play more

upon the fear and suspicion of the muslims. It was pointed out by imperialist writers that program of the nationalist movement was to establish a hindu kingdom in India, and that if that program were realised the muslims would find themselves in a precarious position: they would be subjected to a revengeful tyranny or even driven out of the country like the Moors from Spain. On the other hand, the government refused to pay any heed to the demands of the nationalist movement, on the pretext that it did not represent the view of the entire population. This state of affairs culminated in the organisation of the Indian Muslim League under official inspiration, as a standing challenge to the claims of the National Congress to speak on behalf of the entire nation.

The reactionary nature of hindu nationalism greatly helped the divide-and-rule policy of imperialism. It strengthened the religious preoccupation of the muslims who considered themselves muslims first and Indians last. Whenever necessary the government, with the help of the mullahs (muslim priests), could stir up religious fanaticism among the lowest section of the proletariat and turn their fury against the hindu nationalists. Muslim fanaticism, on its parts, provoked, the corresponding passion among the hindus.

The acuteness of this unfortunate state of affairs was somewhat relieved by the rapid development of native capitalism during the years immediately preceding the world war. Economic interests enabled the bourgeoisie to overcome religious prejudice. Eventually, in 1916, nationalism found a common platform. Hindu and muslim bourgeoisie united in their demand for selfgovernment and fiscal autonomy. Imperialism answered with a very clever move. The very limited franchise (embracing less than two per cent of the population) granted by the reforms act of 1919 was based upon the principle of communal representation. In the beginning the evils of this system were not so clearly felt. They were temporarily drowned by the gigantic mass upheaval of the postwar years. The inclusion of the

redemption of the islamic khilafat in the Indian nationalist program created an apparent unity among the hindus and muslims. But these tactics at the same time encouraged patriotism among the muslims. The failure of the khilafat movement has disturbed the apparent unity; but the results of religious fanaticism are playing havoc.

The religiocommunal problem, dangerous as it is, does not however affect all the social strata; only certain elements of the population are affected by it. A revolutionary outlook on the part of the nationalist leaders would render the solution of the problem much easier. But the nationalists are totally devoid of any understanding of the social basis of this problem. Besides, the leaders themselves are full of religious and communal prejudices which actually frustrate all their frantic attempts at unity. The office-hunting intelligentsia are the spokesmen of communal interests, and the slum proletariat in the cities are the instrument with which the bloody conflicts are precipitated. There has hardly been any case of religious riot in the countryside, in spite of the ignorance and religious prejudice of the peasantry. These class conflicts cut across the artificially fermented religious fanaticism. The landowning class, just as the peasantry, belong to both the religious communities. A muslim landowner exploits his tenant irrespective of religion. So also does the hindu landlord. Only in areas where the landowners and peasants, as classes, belong to different religions, does there exist a certain social basis for religious conflict. This was the case in the moplah rebellion of 1920-21. The peasants were all muslims and the landlords hindus. Consequently, although possessed of a certain religious character, the moplah revolt was an agrarian revolt.

Among the proletariat religious conflict has practically disappeared. For instance, the day after the bloody riots in Calcutta, 7000 workers (hindus and muslims) employed in the jute mills 20 miles away came out on strike as a protest against the ill-treatment of a muslim worker by an English engineer. The police were called in to suppress the strike.

Blood was shed; but the cause on that occasion was just the contrary—it united the struggle of the working class irrespective of religion.

The Calcutta event has its special reasons. It is a part of a plan carefully laid down by the government to break up the Swaraj Party, which, in the province of Bengal, is under certain revolutionary influence. In Bengal the two communities are nearly balanced, the muslims having a small majority. A pact between the hindus and muslims led to the return of a swarajist majority in the last parliamentary election. The next election will take place at the end of the year. The plan of the government is to break up the hindu-muslim pact so that the swarajist majority in the provincial legislative council will be eliminated. The bankruptcy of the swaraj program of parliamentary obstruction has disrupted the nationalist bloc. Now the government is endeavouring to win the muslims to its side by promising the introduction of communal representation in all branches of the public services; in other words, by promising government jobs to the muslim intelligentsia. In order to realise this sinister plan it must be demonstrated that the communities are in a perpetual state of warfare and fly at each others throats at every opportunity. The agitation for the organisation of a muslim party, obviously under official inspiration, strengthened the hands of the reactionary hindu leaders, who are ever ready for an antimuslim campaign. There are a thousand and one pretences on which the slum proletariat in large cities like Calcutta can be incited into a street brawl. A few bottles of alcohol and pieces of silver can always work miracles. That is how the bloody riot of Calcutta, the news of which has been flashed all over the world by Reuter as a proof of Indian's incapacity to govern himself, was engineered.

The growing importance of the proletariat and the rapid development of class-consciousness amongst the poor peasantry render these artificially provoked religious riots of much less gravity than they appear. Nevertheless the

problem of a national minority is there. The bourgeois nationalism, under the ideological influence of the reactionary intelligentsia, has failed to tackle the problem. But approached from the angle of class interests and class struggle this problem becomes comparatively easy.

International Press Conference
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7. HINDU-MUSSULMAN STRIFE

SAFDAR

(Excerpts)

ECONOMIC CAUSES

As a matter of fact, the primary cause of the hindu-mussulman strife is not that it is impossible to unite all the nationalities populating India into a united and independent state. The real cause of this strife lies in the economic conditions of the hindus and mussulmans respectively. The mussulman bourgeoisie represents the most conservative section of the Indian bourgeoisie. While the hindu bourgeoisie, aided by the National Congress, was fighting British imperialism in defence of its interests from the end of the last century, the mussulman bourgeoisie, as such, had then not yet arisen. It is not surprising that at that time Muslim League was established as a counterbalance to the National Congress. This League was an organisation of mohammedan landowners who represented the social bulwark of British rule in India. The whole activity of the League consisted in combating the National Congress, the majority of the members of which were hindus. Naturally, the mussulman landlords found it to their advantage to give this struggle a religious character.

At the present time one of the factors in hindu-mussulman strife is the competition between mussulman merchant capitalism and the more developed industrial commercial capital of the hindus. This is indicated by the fact that the majority of those who took part in the Calcutta riots were hindu and mussulman merchants. The attacks of the mussulmans were directed largely against the hindu merchants. The situation becomes more complicated from the fact that in some provinces the peasants are mohammedans and the landlords are hindus while in other provinces the position is just the reverse.

THE MOPLAH RISING

The moplaha rising on the Malabar coast was purely peasant in character, both in its aims and those who took part in it. As, however, the landlords in this district are hindus they described the revolt of the peasants as a mussulman attack upon the hindus. This they did in the hope that they would obtain the help of other hindus, including peasants.

A similar state of affairs prevails in Bengal, the centre of hindu-mussulman strife. Here too the strife is not religious but social, and is a problem of first-class importance. In Bengal the majority of the mohammedans are peasants, the landlords are in the main hindus; the exploitation of the peasants by the landlords has assumed terrible dimensions. If to this is added the exploitation of the peasants by usurers who are also hindus, it will be clear that the conditions of the peasantry are absolutely intolerable. Nearly 45 per cent of the peasants are almost constantly in debt to the usurers who extort interest amounting sometimes to 75 per cent per annum. Moreover we must bear in mind the heavy burden of taxation and the extreme shortage of land from which the peasants suffer. The Bengal peasant on the average possesses about three acres of land.

From this it will be clear what measures the hindu peasant must take in order to emancipate himself from his

present slavery. First, the abolition of British imperialism which extorts excessive taxes and fosters Indian feudalism. Secondly, the confiscation of the land from the hindu feudal landlords. The discontent of the peasantry, however, found expression in quite a different direction. The mohammedan bourgeoisie of India has taken advantage and continues to take advantage of the discontent of the peasants in order to increase their political and economic influence. The mohammedans occupy 45 per cent of the seats in legislative and civil bodies. They preach to the peasantry that they must support them in holding these seats, on the ground that they, the bourgeoisie, will protect the interests of whole mussulman population of India.

DIVIDE AND RULE

This brings us to the policy of the British government which is based on the principle of "divide and rule". Were it not for the system of separate representation for mussulmans and hindus in the various legislative bodies, the fight of the mussulmans to obtain 45 per cent of the seats would not be so acute. The reactionary mussulman leaders would not be tempted by soft jobs, and undoubtedly they would cease to preach the sacred ideas of islam. The British imperialists, however, foresaw that such a system would be of great advantage to them, and it was on these grounds that they introduced the reforms, which from 1909 to the present day have been directed towards creating a privileged position for the mohammedans. The British have carried out this system in the most cunning manner. The privileged position of the mohammedans inevitably gives rise to strife between the hindus and the mohammedans. A definite number of the seats on legislative bodies are allocated to the mohammedans "in view of their special position". On the surface the British appear to defend the numerically weak mussulman communities, but as a matter of fact that sow discord and rouse a hindu-mussulman conflict.

The British imperialists stick at nothing in order to maintain their rule in India. At the present time when India is advancing by great strides towards industrialisation, and consequently the division of society into various castes is dying out and religious prejudices are disappearing, the British are exerting every effort to set one religious denomination against the other, for this purpose they set up their special electoral systems.

As Lenin wrote in his article "Progressive Asia and Backward Europe", when speaking of the imperialist bourgeoisie: "The dying bourgeoisie is combining with the obsolete and dying forces in order to preserve tottering wage-slavery." It is precisely the obsolete and dying religious and caste divisions in Indian society that the British are trying to preserve by creating a privileged position for the mohammedans. The British imperialists by their experience in Ireland know how it is possible to utilise national minorities for the purpose of strengthening and prolonging their rule. In India these national minorities are the mohammedans. It has long been known that the British were most active in the establishment of the Muslim League, the fundamental purpose of which is to combat Indian nationalism. The present system of creating "special" mussulman interests is a continuation of the policy of "divide and rule".

Even the most revolutionary organisation in India, the Swaraj Party, failed to solve this problem. Its attempt to reach an agreement by the proposal to share posts between hindus and mussulmans in the nationalist India of the future is an attempt to smooth out antagonisms on the basis of group distinctions. This will not solve the problem; on the contrary, it will make the antagonisms between the two national religious groups in India more acute.

HOW NATIONALISM GREW

The history of Indian nationalism may be divided into three periods. In the first period, Indian nationalism adopt-

ed the western ideology. All that was Indian was rejected, all that was European was to serve as something worthy of imitation.

The second period of development of Indian nationalism marked a reaction against the capitulation of Indian nationalism to European culture. In order to combat capitalist culture, a high type of proletarian culture was required, but traces of the proletariat in India could only be discovered with the aid of a microscope at that time. In the same way as the Russian narodniki (populists), in their fight against tsarism, based their revolutionary theories on precapitalist forms of economy (the "mir" or commune) so the Indian nationalists at that time turned to the feudal and medieval system, its superstitions and prejudices. Out of the decaying relics of religious and metaphysical views, on the ruins of the village communes and out of the relics of the departed glory of bygone civilisation they tried to realise the golden dream of an Indian culture which was to serve as their ideal and guiding star.

The present period of development of the national-revolutionary movement in India brings with it the chance to solve the hindu-mussulman problem. The modern Indian big bourgeoisie is allied with British imperialism. The driving forces of the revolution today are the proletariat, the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie (the artisans, small traders and the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia). The economic conditions of these classes are becoming worse and worse, for the compromise between British and Indian capital is based upon intensified exploitation of these classes. The struggle of the latter against imperialism therefore is an historically necessary struggle. In this struggle the proletariat will assume the leadership. This means that the basis of a national struggle will become wider. This will lead to the dying out of group and religious distinctions, for common problems will take supreme place above all others. We see therefore that the solution

of the hindu-mussulman problem is a function of the social struggle of the workers and peasants.

THROUGH THE CLASS STRUGGLE

From what has been said it follows that the only way hindu-mussulman strife can be abolished in India is through the class struggle and the elimination of the survivals of religious ideals in the country. It is the duty of true revolutionaries to introduce, develop and strengthen the conscious elements in this struggle. The Indian nationalists however fail to understand the necessity for such work. More than that even, they look expectantly to the government in the hope that they will take measures to prevent the spread of this strife in India.

In their opinion the British government represents the only ray of hope amidst the gloom that now overshadows India. The *Indian Review*, in a leading article dealing with the hindu-mussulman question, points out that the situation is not as gloomy as it may appear at first sight. There are forces which will bring about mutual harmony between hindus and mussulmans. These forces are a source of rejoicing for they are invincible. It would be as well to bear that in mind at the present time when the cult of separatism is in its ascendancy. First place among those who are striving to weaken communal differences and restore communal harmony must, in the opinion of the *Indian Review*, belong to Lord Irwin!

The character of the "neutrality" of the British with regard to the caste system in India is very well known. The British and Indian manufacturers artificially maintain the existence of the caste system. On the other hand, however, the factory system and capitalist exploitation of the rural districts are destroying the feudal forms of social life. The spectre of class struggle is beginning to haunt India. Hindu-mussulman strife is partly an expression of the class struggle.

WORKERS AND PEASANTS

Reports in the newspapers show that in the majority of conflicts in Bengal the mohammedans were the attacking party. The Indian nationalists fail to understand why it is that the mohammedans and not the hindus are the attacking party. This is due to the fact that in the majority the mohammedans are subject to the hindus. In Bengal 90 per cent of the capitalist employers are hindus.

This grain of fact is worth more than a bushel of argument. It clearly shows that the hindu-mussulman strife is an expression of the spirit of irreconcilable protest on the part of the workers and peasants against their present conditions of life. Our task is to free these masses from the dirty rags of religious and caste distinctions hampering the development of the class struggle. This alone will free India from a recrudescence of hindu-mussulman strife.

Communist International
30 March 1927

8. THE COMMUNAL STRIFE

The most outstanding and at the same time the most deplorable feature of the present situation in India is the communal strife. Communal riots are spreading all over the country. The black clouds of civil warfare, which had first appeared in the north, are enveloping the whole atmosphere. Hindus and muslims are cutting each other's throats on slight provocation coming from one side or the other. The whole political and social atmosphere has been poisoned by the violent outburst of fanaticism of the most primitive kind. The common struggle against an alien government for the establishment of swaraj has been thrown into background. Parties are springing up not on

healthy political and economic basis, but on the ground of "communalism".

The situation is very gloomy. The nationalist press recognises it. The leaders of the Congress—at least those who have not been swept away by the rising tide of "communalism"—realise the gravity of the situation. At their best they ask the warring people to change their hearts as they have been imploring the British imperialism to do. Nobody, it seems, is going to change hearts by requests or even ukases. That will not do. To get out of the impasse we should analyse the causes of the trouble so that the correct remedy may be discovered.

CAUSES

There is a class of people whose mission is to go on adding fuel to the fire. They keep up the conflagration of internecine strife to gain some definite political and economic ends. This class consists of the following elements: (1) Parasitic class of priests who masquerade as maulanas and mahatmas and whose influence among the masses tends to decrease in proportion as the country goes more and more through the capitalist exploitation. It is to their material interest to kindle and to feed the flames of religious fanaticism. Faced with the menace of unemployment, so to say, they are creating work for themselves. (2) Reactionary politicians who lost ground during the nationalist movement of noncooperation. (3) Unemployed intelligentsia. The hitherto weak and less numerous muslim intellectuals are struggling against their powerful hindu rivals to get administrative posts in the country. (4) The petty-bourgeois elements engaged in trading business in the town and village. Here again the young muslim bourgeoisie is entering into a keen competition with their strong hindu compatriots. (5) Lumpenproletariat and goondas who are used by the police to start the affray. They are paid for it.

All these people are interested in the communal fighting because they aim at getting political and economic benefits thereby. The professional classes may look for

seats in the legislatures on the "communal" ticket, middle-class intellectuals for posts and offices, and a shopkeeper who cannot compete openly for an exclusive market among his coreligionists. To achieve this end they have to make themselves popular in a way. They exploit the antagonism existing between the peasants and the moneylenders, between the cultivators and the landlords, between the workers and the capitalists, and between the proletarianised intellectuals and their exploiters. The way in which the moneylenders' bill in the Punjab was made a communal issue shows how pure economic antagonism is directed into the wrong channels by the interested parties. The Malabar riots were objectively the expression of struggle of the peasantry against the landlords. In Bengal the riots have spread to the country where incidents of peasants refusing to pay taxes to the landlords have been reported. In the absence of a popular movement which could direct the discontent of the exploited people along sane and healthy political and economic lines and organise the peasantry and the workers for their political and economic emancipation, the evil forces are at work to inflame that discontent in the name of religion and in order to profit from it. Proselytisation from one religion into another, playing of music before mosques, killing of cows, all these sources of dissension are not new phenomena in the life of the country. They existed before without plunging the country into such a disaster. These are not the causes but pretexts employed as useful instruments to inflame the minds of the people. None of these things touches the life of the masses at all. Does the playing of hindu music affect the life of the muslim peasants in any way? Will the stopping of cow-killing bring any prosperity to the hindu cultivators? Nothing of the sort. The traditional reverence of the cow by the hindu is exploited to rouse him against mussulman beef-eaters, although all the Britishers who are there kill cows for food. Playing of music before mosques is only unpardonable and provocative when hindus play it. A muslim marriage procession passing a mosque with bands playing will not arouse anybody to anger.

THE HIDDEN HAND

There is another agency which is interested to see that the civil war is kept going on. This is the hidden hand of imperialism. All kinds of diplomatic and ingenious methods are used to encourage the communal strife, with a double purpose. Firstly, to disrupt the nationalist movement which menaces the safety of the empire and, secondly, to supply another argument to justify the British domination. The imperialist press sketches harrowing and blood-curdling scenes of anarchy and bloodshed if the controlling power of the British bayonets is withdrawn. Incidentally, the bloodshed is going on now in spite of all those bayonets still in India.

Imperialist diplomacy has always sought to maintain an ally in the task of subjugation, more so in times of popular nationalist movement. The history of Irish struggle has shown that a community in minority in the country can be easily exploited by crafty imperialists to gain their own ends. In India the muslim community happens to be in minority. That is nothing in itself, if the muslims and hindus look upon themselves as Indians only. Unfortunately that is not the case at present, and whatever fears, imaginary or real, the hindus may have from panislamism, the muslims dread the hindu majority in the prospective swaraj. This fear of the muslims, coupled with their backwardness in educational, political and economic development, has been more than once exploited by British imperialism. During the swadeshi movement in Bengal following upon the partition, muslims were set against the hindus. Later on the Muslim League itself was started with the advice of the government with a view to counteract the hindu nationalist activities. Thanks to events outside India and also to their advancement politically, the muslims could no longer be looked upon as loyal to the sircar. The noncooperation movement saw both hindus and muslims fighting shoulder to shoulder against the enemy. It was however a temporary affair. On the liquidation of the movement the old hostilities began to come on the surface. This was the propitious

moment for the British imperialists to accelerate their efforts, to use their old tactics of "divide and rule".

As an example how the communal feuds are encouraged by the British officials and how the community in minority is being exploited by imperialism to counteract the nationalist movement, let us take the affair of the celebration of cow-sacrifice on the last Bakr-Id occasion in Delhi. The procession of cows meant for slaughter was forbidden by the hindu kotwal of the city to pass through a particular street where there was a danger of hindu-muslim riot to break up. The British district officer exploited the opportunity and marched at the head of the procession reminding the muslims in eloquent terms of their right to kill as many cows as they liked and to take the procession by whatever route they desired. The tone of the deputy commissioner was not of a man who would use his authority to calm excited passions, but of a man who was encouraging and even exciting the mob to adopt an aggressive attitude. The object of the British officer was achieved. A Urdu muslim daily which used to be an organ of khilafat and antagonistic to the British reported the incident with the headlines in big print: "The hindu kotwal forbade our procession, but the British deputy commissioner led it to its destination." Of course the whole responsibility for this deplorable situation rests on the people who afford such opportunities to imperialism to exploit their quarrels for their own nefarious ends.

The British diplomats adapt their harangue according to the community which they wish to please at a particular time in order to enforce their "divide and rule" policy. When muslims are destined to be the "favourite wife" the British empire is represented to be the biggest muslim empire in the world as it counts millions of mussulmans under its yoke. A madcap muslim priest had actually prophesied that his Britannic majesty would embrace islam, by which process the empire would become muslim. The muslims who are sometimes called "virile" by flattery, are led to think that they must have special consideration in any scheme of swaraj because as predecessors of British rulers they have a "special status". It is on the basis

of the "special status" that the muslims demand a greater percentage of the seats than in proportion to their actual number. On the other hand when the muslims are "conspiring with his majesty's enemies outside India" and it is desired to placate hindu feelings, it is discovered that the British are as pure Aryans in origin as the hindus. At the same time the bogey of panislamism with all its dangers to hinduism is made a subject of propoganda in the imperialist press. It is preached that if law and order are set at naught in India, if the Britishers are forced to withdraw, the Afghans would invade the country and would enslave and loot the hindus with the support of the Indian muslims.

Much thought has been devoted to seek a remedy for the disastrous evil of "communal strife". Pacts and protocols have been made, but have not worked. In view of the present alarming situation one Roy Chowdhury, who is a government-nominated labour "representative" in the legislative assembly, has proposed that a demonstration of British strength should be made by marching an army through all the areas affected by communal riots. The labour "representative" wishes to vie with General Dyer in keeping up the prestige of British arms. Another fantastic scheme which found favour in high nationalist quarters was to disfranchise the people of the district which was the scene of communal fighting.

These schemes of pacts etc. are only meant to protect the thin layer of 2 per cent of the population, the enfranchised ones who for the sake of their "loaves and fishes" carry on reckless propoganda among the masses. These gentlemen should not be allowed to exploit the masses for their personal ends if any permanent solution of the situation is desired. Pacts and protocols may effect compromise for the time being among these warring intellectuals, but unless something is done to arouse the consciousness of the masses on the basis of a politicoeconomic program, the malefactors would again be able to plunge the country into disastrous riots.

The mixing of religion with politics is another factor which leads to resuscitation of communal bickerings. A

political movement based on religion cannot but lead to religious aggressiveness and thus defeat its own purpose. There can only be a temporary cooperation among the different religious communities who join hands in the struggle against a common enemy. Once this struggle is slackened the allies fall foul of one another, and the weapon used against the third party is employed more vigorously among each other. The people of India may have any number of religions, but politically and economically they find themselves in the same situation. Therefore it is on this basis only that a permanent union among the people can be effected. The movement for national emancipation must be divorced uncompromisingly from religion, otherwise it will bring ruin and disaster in its wake. There lies the only hope for the success of the struggle.

Who should lead such a movement and what should be its program?

A national union formed some time ago and comprising people of different shades of political opinion cannot achieve any important results. It is not only far removed from the masses and a mass movement, but also is composed of a motley crowd of swarajists, liberals and moderates. The masses have been affected by the communal evil, their legitimate discontent and their class struggle is being exploited in the name of religion by the bourgeois and middleclass politicians to gain their political and economic ends. This malady can only be remedied by tireless activities of a party which should be formed from the masses, which should apply the dynamic force of the class struggle for their emancipation and not for their personal ends. Such a party has to unmask the wirepullers of the present rioting. It has to condemn both aggressive hinduism and aggressive islam. Its aims should be to free the people from the slavery of religious fanaticism and traditional social evils, and to transform the religious ideology of the masses into consciousness of their politicoeconomic struggle.

The Swaraj Party, the custodians of bourgeois nationalism of the Congress, is also unable to take upon itself the

stupendous task. A part of the rank-and-file of the party discontented and disgusted with the leadership may break away from the parent organisation and lay the foundation of a party of the people. But this is hypothetical at the present moment. The party as a whole has definitely broken away from the masses. It has pledged itself to dominion status within the empire. Its craving for a compromise with imperialism is stronger than ever. Its ranks have already been thinned by the breaking away of a group styling themselves as responsivists. After the experience of mass upheaval of the noncooperation days, it has a mortal dread of the tremendous forces of the masses. By its foolish mistakes it has allowed the clever imperialists to alienate mussulmans from its ranks.

The confusion is great. But there is no reason for disappointment. There are already signs of the crystallisation of a party to be founded on mass action. Its program has to be: (1) complete independence of India and formation of a federal republic of India with rights of self-determination for minorities; (2) abolition of landlordism, and allocation of land to landless peasantry; (3) to free the peasantry and workers from usurers by starting agricultural banks and cooperatives; (4) minimum living wage for the workers, eight-hour day, maternity benefits, old-age pension, etc.; (5) nationalisation of the works of public utility; (6) improvement of agriculture by state aid; (7) freedom for workers and peasants to form their unions; (8) freedom of worship but no religion allowed to be mixed with politics.

It is only on such a program that the wide masses of the people can be united, their dynamic energy employed for their liberation and not for cutting each other's throats as at present. The program gives a wide scope of constructive work such as our presentday politicians have sworn to undertake but have never carried out. "Back to the villages" not to preach the virtues of charkha and khaddar, but to arouse the consciousness of the peasantry to struggle for obtaining higher standards of life and to revolt against the political and economic bondage. Mass

civil disobedience, the discarded weapon of the bourgeois nationalism, would crown the program of action and hindus and muslims would march shoulder to shoulder as brothers in the fight.

The Masses

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III. National Communism

9. NATIONAL COMMUNISM

BEWARE OF FALSE FRIENDS

I

Our readers will remember that one Mr Satyabhakta produced a legal communist party at Kanpur in 1924 immediately after four people had been sentenced to rigorous imprisonment on the charge of making communist propaganda. After a year-and-a-half's uneventful life Mr Satyabhakta called a communist conference at the end of 1925. The first legal communist conference in India should be a historic event. It was the duty of every communist to contribute to its success. We had watched closely the behaviour (there was no activity) of Mr Satyabhakta and his party. Consequently, we had taken cognisance of certain facts which quite possibly were not noticed by everybody. We thought it necessary that these facts should be made known, so that none should attend the communist conference with any wrong conception about the nature of its convener. Our object was to point out that Mr Satyabhakta was not a communist. This was a serious charge against the secretary of a "communist party" and the convener of a communist conference. Conclusive evidence had to be produced. Fortunately such evidence was in abundance and we had little difficulty in putting the

facts together to make our case. We challenged the pretensions of Mr Satyabhakta not for any personal motive. None would be more glad than we to see the ranks of communists swell in India. If Satyabhakta had been a communist, we would not only hail him as a comrade; we would follow him as our leader; had he possessed the knowledge, talent and ability required of a leader. Having none, he was a simple impostor. We would have been disloyal to the working class if we had failed to show up Mr Satyabhakta in his true colours. This we did in our January issue in the article "What is a Communist Party?".

Instead of disputing the facts cited by us and answering the criticism of his notion of communism, Mr Satyabhakta has chosen a form of defence very damaging to himself. In a leaflet issued on 1 May he heaps abuse on Comrade M. N. Roy, whom he assumes to be author of the article in the *Masses*. We wonder why it took him so long to wake up and decide to break a lance. We however welcome the opportunity and are quite prepared to meet him on his own grounds.

Obviously Satyabhakta does not know what is a communist party and is unable to meet our criticism of his "communist program". He does not enter into a theoretical polemic with us. He has issued the leaflet to deny that he is an agent-provocateur and to abuse Roy whom, on the authority of "an Indian gentleman by the name of Acharya" residing in Berlin, he calls a British spy, Satyabhakta appears to be very touchy. We never said that his communist party "has been started with the help of the police". Why does he not acquaint himself with the content of our article instead of having them interpreted for him by Acharya? The article in the *Masses* was objective. In it were stated a series of facts about the birth and behaviour of the "communist party" of Satyabhakta, and the readers were left to draw their own conclusions. The second part of the article contains criticism of Satyabhakta's notion of what a communist party is, and outlined the general

principles of communism. Satyabhakta could explain the facts which were of a very suspicious nature; but he did not.

Now a few words about Acharya and his "thorough investigation in Russia and Germany" to establish that "Roy is an agent of the British government". His article in "a labour revolutionary paper of Germany" (*Der Sindikalist*) did not escape our notice. It contained the production of a deranged mind. The "charges" were too ludicrous to be taken seriously. For example, apart from Roy, old important members of the Russian Communist Party were also called British agents. The Soviet ambassador at Peking Comrade Kara Khan and the chief adviser to the Canton government, Comrade Borodin, were included in the list. Roy was therefore in very good company. Why should he bother to take notice of a raving lunatic, as Acharya is? Satyabhakta does not improve his position in the least by calling Roy a British agent on the authority of Acharya. He should keep to the point and speak in a political language if he is capable of doing so. Satyabhakta cannot establish his right to the leadership of the Indian proletariat by abusing Roy. He must have other qualifications.

The following facts were pointed out in the article in our January issue: (1) Satyabhakta was allowed to organise a legal "communist party" at Kanpur immediately after communist propoganda and communist organisations (even to receive letters from communists) had been declared illegal by the court in the same city; (2) in a statement to the press Satyabhakta assured the government that there were no "bolshevik agents" among the workers of Kanpur; (3) in the same statement he called Roy a "bolshevik agent", just as the British police do; (4) he further stated that "the workers of Kanpur are not such as can be persuaded to adopt such stupid and hopeless procedure (as contained in the writings of Roy) - i.e. to organise themselves into a party which will be the vanguard in the struggle for national freedom"; (5) Satya-

bhakta repudiated the program of national revolution as stated in the illegal leaflet "Revolutionary" (complete evacuation of India by the British and the establishment of a federal republic); he declared that his party "was opposed to some of the principles and the present program of the (revolutionary) party"; (6) the UP government was interpellated as to why the secretary of the Kanpur "communist party" was not prosecuted if the communist organisation was illegal as ruled by the court; no answer was available from the government; (7) protesting against the search of his office, Satyabhakta told that he had asked the government what books should not be kept in his bookshop; he further declared that there was not a single book in his office containing anything "against the government or the emperor of India"; (8) according to his own statement during a year-and-half's life 78 "ladies and gentlemen" were enrolled in the communist party of Satyabhakta.

On the basis of these facts were made the following remarks in our January issue:

"Satyabhakta's 'communist party' is of the safe and sane kind which can not only be ignored by the government, but can even merit official patronage... It is remarkable how Satyabhakta vies with the British government to guard the Indian labour movement against any possible influence of 'bolshevik agents'. Is not this anxiety on his part sufficient reason for the government to give him freedom of action? It is certainly advantageous for the British police to have a "communist party" hunting the heresy of bolshevism. So much more useful does this party become when it operates in an industrial centre like Kanpur where, according to Mr Satyabhakta there are workers who 'take kindly to bolshevik or communist principles'. What a crime for the proletariat to take kindly to communist principles! A "communist party" that considers the workers' liking for communist principles a danger signal is a very curious phenomenon indeed... According to his own statement, the principles of Satyabhakta and his

'communist party' are against these vital issues (of national independence, organisation of a democratic state, etc.). That is, the knight-errant of the Indian working class is against national independence, is opposed to a democratic government and does not believe that the world proletariat led by the Russian working class are the historical ally of the subject peoples in their struggle for national freedom...

"A 'communist party' that does not fight for national independence of a subject people, does not lead an agrarian revolution against feudal landlordism, is opposed to international affiliation, preaches that the proletariat should not act till they are hundred per cent organised, does not have any idea about militant labour organisation, does not believe in revolution, is hostile to armed insurrection and eager to do justice to the possessing classes, such a 'communist party' can receive justice from the British government, but will never be the party of the Indian working class—the vanguard in the struggle for freedom..."

Neither in his leaflet nor in any other place does Satyabhakta attempt to dispute the veracity of these facts: and given the facts, the conclusion cannot be avoided. Satyabhakta is not a communist. He does not know anything about communist theories. His notions of communism and the kind of "communist party" he would organise is harmful to the interests of the Indian working class—is hostile to the national revolution. Therefore he and his pretensions to organise a communist party are very likely to receive official patronage.

If Satyabhakta was unable to dispute the damaging facts, much less could he meet our criticism of his policy and program. In the leaflet in question he further develops his program and declares "we prefer a policy of national communism for this country". Now, "national communism" is an anomalous term. To realise communism is the historic role of the proletariat, and "the working class has

no country" (*Communist Manifesto* by Marx and Engels). The exploiting classes and their agents inside the labour movement endeavour to split the working class on national lines, thus weakening the class solidarity of the proletariat. Communists do not preach artificial internationalism. They fully recognise the fact that the world is split up in national states in a perpetual state of war. But they also recognise that right through these warring national states runs a line dividing society into two classes—the possessing and the dispossessed. That is, the proletariat is an international class. It must, therefore, organise itself internationally and fight on an international front. The communists are the leaders of the proletariat because they understand the international nature of the *Communist Manifesto*: "The communists are distinguished from the other workingclass parties by this only: (1) In the national struggle of the proletarians of the different countries, they point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat independently of all nationalities. (2) In the various stages of development which the struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie has to pass through, they always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole."

This being the case, there can be no such thing as "national communism". Communist betray their historic role, if they fail to recognise the international character of the class struggle. A national communist is an enemy of the proletariat, because he misleads them. By advocating "national communism" Satyabhakta betrays ignorance of the most rudimentary principles and problems of the class struggle. He thinks that the communists advocate the same sort of internationalism as the bourgeoisie seek to realise through the League of Nations, World Court, etc. Satyabhakta cannot see the difference between the Communist International and the League of Nations. To him both of them are trying to realise the utopian goal of internationalism. If the League of Nations has for its background warring national states, the Communist Inter-

national rests upon the solidarity of a class free from internal contradiction, transcending national boundaries.

Satyabhakta's argument is that the proletariat should withdraw within national boundaries because there "exist so many hostile governments". This is precisely what the hostile governments want. As long as they can keep the working class unconscious of its supernational nature, the hostile governments will continue to exist and carry on their mutual hostilities at the expense of the proletariat. Satyabhakta advises the proletariat to do the bidding of the national bourgeois states until they have made up their differences and realised idyllic internationalism. Nobody possessing the least understanding of capitalist society would set up such an illusion. Inner-contradiction is the very essence of capitalist society. While the entire capitalist class lives and thrives by exploiting the labouring masses, it is divided into rival groups. Competition is the basic principle of capitalist economics and individualism is the backbone of bourgeois philosophy. National antagonism, imperialist rivalry leads to war in which millions of proletarian lives are sacrificed and untold treasures of material wealth created by human labour devastated. The role of the proletariat is not to establish internationalism; internationalism is an accomplished fact in the life of the working class. The role of the proletariat is to organise itself nationally and internationally to overthrow the capitalist system and the mutually hostile bourgeois governments.

Satyabhakta writes in his statement that "Roy and his Indian agents find an excuse to attack me" because of the "relation and tendency which I maintain towards the Communist International". In the first place this is not true. His relation to the Communist International is one of the many points in the program of Satyabhakta's communist party which we have criticised. In the second place, we have never maintained that it is obligatory for the Indian proletariat to be affiliated to the Communist International. What we always maintained and still maintain is that the

struggle of the Indian working class for national and social freedom must be closely linked up with the international proletarian movement. We have never been of the point of view that our struggle for national freedom should in the least be prejudiced by special notion of internationalism. But what we do maintain is that the success of this struggle largely depends upon the support of the proletariat in the imperialist countries and of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics where the workers and peasants are in power. The Chinese experience completely bears out our contention. Had there not been a determined resistance from the working class in their respective countries the imperialist powers would have taken much more aggressive policy to crush the revolt of the Chinese people. The resistance of the French proletariat to the colonial wars in Morocco and Syria is well known. In these instances and in all other similar ones it was the communists who led the proletariat to the freedom movement of the colonial peoples.

The working class in the imperialist countries sympathises with and supports the struggle for freedom of the subject peoples but not as an act of charity. The fate of the two are bound up together. Both are exploited by the capitalist system. The objective role of the proletariat is to replace bourgeois society by communism. Colonial exploitation is a source of great strength for capitalism. Therefore the fight of the proletariat for the overthrow of capitalism is organically related with the movement for colonial liberation. Understanding of this interrelation of the forces of revolution enables the communists to see why it is necessary that the Indian labour movement—indeed the entire movement for national freedom—must be connected with the international revolutionary forces.

The communists are the vanguard of the proletarian army. They must give conscious expression to the will of the entire class. Under their influence and guidance the Indian working class must take its proper place in the fight for freedom. To isolate the Indian labour and

nationalist movement from the international revolutionary forces is to weaken it. The imperialists know it very well; therefore they concentrate all their resources to prevent the Indian revolutionary movement from being internationally connected. The attitude of Satyabhakta towards the Communist International fits into the policy of British imperialism. The conscious vanguard of the working class must condemn this attitude as counterrevolutionary.

II

Our quarrel with Satyabhakta is not, as he claims, only on the ground of his reprehensible attitude towards international affiliation of the Indian labour movement. It is one of the many points of difference. Our main contention is that Satyabhakta is not a communist; that he is an impostor; and that the policy and program advocated by him are harmful to the Indian labour movement. This was proved to the hilt in the article in the *Masses*. In his statement Satyabhakta further substantiates our contentions rather than disproving them. To support his hostility to any international affiliation of the Indian labour movement, he argues that an international communist organisation is not possible, because "Communism is still a much undeveloped doctrine." Obviously Satyabhakta pretends to improve communism as formulated by Marx—communism that has for seventy-five years been the banner held high by the ever-growing proletarian vanguard—communism under whose banner the Russian proletariat have freed one-sixth of the globe from the yoke of capitalism. This pretension might not be so ridiculous if he had the least understanding of the fundamentals of communism. Satyabhakta even does not know that communism is neither a doctrine nor a dogma. It is not a religion. It is a program of reconstruction of human society. The program is not the product of an individual's imagination. It is the result of a scientific examination of the entire process of social evolution. It grows out of the conditions created by class-ridden society. The foundation of communism is positive social science.

Marxian principle and program of communism cannot be revised unless it were possible to revise the whole history of the evolution of society. Men, much bigger than Satyabhakta, tried to find fault with or improve upon communism as formulated by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. The ideological apologists of the capitalist system naturally found fault with Marxism. Those who pretended to improve upon it, really sought to revise Marxian communism by divesting it of its international revolutionary character.

The epoch-making teachings of Marx are not divine revelation. They were the result of a scientific investigation of human history. Before the genius of Marx history ceased to be a series of unintelligible accidents dominated by the so-called great men (the hindu avatarbad). It appeared in the light of a continual process of evolution determined by a uniform law. The basis of communism is the Marxian interpretation of history—materialist conception of history. A scientific examination of history reveals: (1) that development of the forces of production leads to successive changes in the ideological, political and cultural structure of society; (2) that the disruption of the primitive communist society was caused by the growth of private property created by the possession of the means of production (tools); (3) that development of private property split society into classes; (4) that since the dawn of civilisation the history of human society is the history of the class struggle; (5) that under the modern capitalist system the class demarcation grows ever sharper and class-war becomes the normal condition; (6) that thanks to the epoch-making scientific discoveries the means of production attain degrees of perfection growing ever higher; (7) that the consequence of the phenomenal development of the means of production is great factories employing thousands of workers; (8) that socialisation of the means of production violently conflicts with their private ownership; (9) that capitalism, which in the beginning was objectively a progressive agency in that it

helped to develop the means of production, now becomes a reactionary force, because it insists on keeping the means of production in the fetters of private property; (10) that owing to its innercontradiction, which grows more intense, the more capitalism develops, capitalist system of production is doomed to collapse to be replaced by socialist reconstruction of production and distribution.

These are historical facts. They are neither doctrines nor dogmas. They cannot be subjected to the theory of relativity: you must either recognise them or try to refute their reality. So it is simply nonsense to say that "Communism is still much undeveloped". The long and short of the thing is that Satyabhakta does not agree with the Marxian (scientific) interpretation of history. Nor has he the ability to challenge the correctness of that interpretation. One who does not accept the materialist conception of history is not a communist. Therefore Satyabhakta is an impostor when he calls himself a communist. His attempt to organise a "communist party" has for its object to mislead the Indian proletariat.

The communists do not stop at the recognition of these historical facts and the inexorable law underlying them. They draw the logical conclusion from them in order to accelerate the inevitable process of capitalist decline and lead the movement for socialist construction. The communists are the conscious vanguard of the proletariat. They point out to the proletariat its historic role—grave-digger of capitalism and builder of socialism. They lead proletariat as an international army in the revolutionary struggle to free society from class domination and thus liberate the forces of production from the cramping grip of private ownership. This struggle is a prolonged process.

Capitalism has long outgrown national boundaries. Capital has no country. It knows no patriotism although it promotes patriotic feelings to further its motives of exploitation. In the form of imperialism it brings the labouring masses of the most farflung parts of the globe under its yoke. The fight against capitalism therefore must

be international. As the leaders of this fight the communists cannot operate within national boundaries. Let alone "national communism", in these days of imperialist exploitation even nationalism (of the subject peoples) cannot be strictly national. The struggle for national freedom in the colonial countries is an integral part of the worldwide social revolt to liberate humanity from the ruinous yoke of capitalism. While history has made even the contemporary movement for national freedom essentially international, Satyabhakta proposes to organise a "communist party" which will operate within the confines of India. He wants the Indian working class to be a "frog in the well", when they are exploited by an agency which operates on an international scale. His object therefore is obviously sinister. He seeks to isolate the Indian working class from their more advanced, more experienced and better organised allies. If not actually employed by imperialism, he is certainly working for it.

Taking his cue from the capitalist press Satyabhakta harps: "Even in Russia where a communist government is existing it (communism) is undergoing several changes." This is culled from the antisoviet capitalist propaganda also as an argument against international proletarian organisation. The statement about Russia is very tendentious. If it means anything it means that the Indian working class should not run after the chimera of communism which has failed to stand the practical test in Russia and which generally is a very "undeveloped doctrine". Is it not remarkable that a man calling himself a communist and pretending to organise a communist party should deprecate communism? Do not the interests of the working class demand that such a man should be held up in his true colours?

What is the program of communism? The main points in the communist program are: (1) overthrow of the capitalist system and its political organ, the bourgeois state; (2) abolition of private property in the means of production, distribution and exchange; (3) dictatorship of the

proletariat until classes disappear as the result of the abolition of private property.

The Russian revolution has overthrown the capitalist state and has placed the political power in the hands of the working class. The aristocracy and the bourgeoisie have been expropriated. Private property in land is abolished. The means of production, distribution and exchange (factories, mines, railways, trading organisations, banks, etc.) are all socialised. If peasants hold land and own the produce thereof, if small private trade is still in operation, if some small factories are run as private concerns, they do not indicate abandoning of the communist program or repudiation of communism. On the contrary, these variations are all fitted in the grand and complicated process of socialist construction in an industrially backward country. Transportation is completely a social enterprise. Private ownership has been totally abolished in the basic industries (mines and metal industries). Hardly 10 per cent of the entire industry of the country is privately owned.

We do not require the wisdom of "national communism" to see that "social and religious conditions of different countries vary so much". But possessing a scientific knowledge of human history we can also discover a uniform law of evolution operating underneath all these varying conditions. Therefore we are able to apply communist tactics (in conformity with the general communist program) everywhere. For example, socialist reconstruction of society has been begun in an industrially backward country like Russia, although ordinarily socialism grows out of the organism of highly-developed capitalist system. "The sentimental, orthodox and blindly religious people of India will take ages to reach the nationalistic status" if they followed the path indicated by Satyabhakta. Perhaps in that case they would never help the Indian masses to throw off the chains of tradition and ignorance? And how? The communists will do this by means of propaganda and agitation based upon the Marxian appreciation of social progress. Therefore the forced

backwardness of the Indian masses does not conflict with a clear Marxian understanding on the part of their leaders. On the contrary, it makes such understanding all the more necessary.

In wounded dignity Satyabhakta cries: "Unlike Mr Roy I am not sitting in a far off land and my activities are open to criticism and examination of the Indian public" (We do not care to answer this reflection upon Roy's forced exile). There are serious flaws in this sentence which appears to be the climax of Satyabhakta's defence. It shows that he does not recognise the fact that the present human society (Indian being no exception), is divided into antagonistic classes. He seeks his mandate not from the working class, as a communist should do, but from the "Indian public". Therefore he is not a communist; he is, at best estimation—a democrat. He is even not that because his "communist principles" accommodate foreign kings and emperors together with native landlords, to all whom he wants to do justice (this is stated in his program). One who subjects his activities to the "criticism and examination" of the entire public, including the landlords, capitalists and their henchmen, cannot be expected to be defender of proletarian interests. Still this is exactly what Satyabhakta says he proposes to do. Therefore his pretension to the leadership of the Indian working class is suspect. The starting point of communism is the recognition of class interests and class antagonism. Satyabhakta does not start from this point. He says (in his statement) that the program of his party will be successfully carried out when "our countrymen will realise the necessity and importance of this party". So, the "national communist party" proposes not to represent the interests and express the objective demands of the working class. It would lead the Indian working class to social liberation when all "our countrymen" (irrespective of classes) agreed with such a program! A strange communist party, indeed! But "national communism" does not lead anywhere else.

Satyabhakta's desire to abide by the verdict of the

entire people might lead one to think that what he really proposes is to organise a nationalist revolutionary party and that this is a very necessary and laudable proposition under present Indian conditions. But Satyabhakta is against a national revolution. In "The Revolutionary", our criticism of Satyabhakta and his "communist party" was mainly on the question of a national revolution. The primary task of the communists in colonial countries is to be in the front lines of the fight for national freedom. The road to social emancipation in India (as in all other subject countries) lies through national emancipation. National revolution must precede the social revolution. Overthrow of the imperialist autocracy, liquidation of the remnants of feudalism and other medieval social forms, democratisation of the country, socialisation of the means of production, development of the forces of production—all these will help the proletariat in the historic struggle for socialism. They constitute the essential points of the program of national revolution. Therefore the political organ of the proletariat—a real communist party—must actively participate, lead if necessary (and it is necessary in India) the nationalist revolutionary struggle.

In the "Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy Case" the government declared that communist activities for organising the workers and peasants in a party to overthrow the British domination in India was illegal and should be treated as "criminal conspiracy"; but the government was not against "communism as such": That is, a communist party fighting for national independence should not be tolerated and must be crushed by all means; while a "communist party"—isolated from the struggle for national freedom "trying to preach the economic side of communism in India" (as Satyabhakta proposes to do)—might be safely ignored, even encouraged.

Satyabhakta did not altogether fail to notice that his attitude towards national revolution let the cat out of the bag. Therefore in his statement of May he endeavours to rectify the mistake by saying "our first and foremost

duty is to devote all our resources and energy to gain the freedom of our country". But these are empty words. These meaningless words are uttered only as an argument against the international nature of the Indian revolutionary movement. By this ostentatious protestation he only seeks to weaken the struggle for national freedom; because if he had his way, he would isolate the Indian movement from the forces of world revolution. In the present world situation this policy would be positively injurious for the Indian people.

Besides Satyabhakta's whole conception of communism, the program and policy he advocates for the Indian working class, negates his belated and obviously artful protestations in favour of national freedom. He "agrees with the general principles of communism with our foreign comrades", but tries "to preach the economic side in India". Admittedly he does not agree that the political principles of communism should be applied to India. In parenthesis it should be remarked that only an ignoramus divides communism into two watertight compartments of a political and economic side. However, what are the political principles of communism? The dominating class controls the powers of the state to maintain its position; therefore any attempt to change a given order of society must primarily lead to the struggle for political power. The working class cannot end the capitalist system until and unless the state power is wrested from the bourgeoisie by the proletariat. A subject people cannot liberate itself from imperialist yoke except through the capture of the national state.

Satyabhakta's "national communist party" would not ask the proletariat and the people to bother with this fundamental question of political power. It would leave the capitalists in possession of the state power. It would leave British imperialism as the supreme political power in India. It would only "preach the economic side of communism". That means "national communism" would teach the working class how to enjoy wage-slavery. It would

teach the Indian people how to be free and happy under the iron heel of British imperialism.

With a gesture of wisdom Satyabhakta argues "as the economic condition is the root of all social and religious changes" only "the economic side of communism" should be "preached in India". This is a vulgarisation of materialism. According to this theory the Indian working class must try to improve their economic conditions irrespective of the agencies that create those conditions. In this reformist zeal Satyabhakta forgets altogether the little question of political power which is at the root of the present deplorable economic condition of the Indian masses and their consequent social backwardness and religious prejudices. Religious and social changes are brought about by the development of productive forces. In the present Indian situation the working class has no control over the means of production. They are all owned and controlled primarily by British imperialism and partially by the native bourgeoisie. Therefore the working class cannot have anything to say in their development—a process which alone could effect social and religious changes. The working class will guide the development of the forces of production only after it has conquered political power. This is still a far cry in India. Imperialism cramps the productive forces of India to exploit her people the more. A free development of the productive forces which will liberate the Indian masses from the chains of tradition, prejudice, ignorance, etc. is conditional upon the overthrow of imperialist autocracy and radical democratisation of the country. Economic conditions of the Indian people cannot be improved until and unless political freedom is attained. To advise the Indian masses to shun politics and devote their attention to the "economic side" of things is counterrevolutionary; and this is exactly what Satyabhakta does.

In conclusion, let it be stated that our opinion as regards Satyabhakta is not dictated by any personal consideration. It is arrived at by a critical objective examination of his

own statements. We convict him of being an objective tool of imperialist exploitation and of attempting to mislead the Indian working class on his own evidence. Our object in entering this polemic is to clarify the fundamental issues confronting the Indian proletariat. There can never be a communist party unless the vanguard of the Indian working class possesses a clear understanding of scientific socialism (Marxism and Leninism) and is able to approach the Indian problems in the light of that understanding. In India the communist movement is young. It must be warned against the danger of ideological deviations. It must be protected from the sinister designs of impostors. Indian proletariat does not need leaders who would revise communism to win the approbation of the ruling class. On the contrary, to make up for lost time, during which it was held in backwardness by imperialist exploitation, it must have a clear-sighted, courageous, faithful Marxist leadership to guide it in the historic struggle for national freedom and social emancipation.

20 August 1926.

M. N. Roy

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IV. "Modern India" and "Future of Indian Politics"

10. MODERN INDIA

R. PALME DUTT

(Excerpts)

The subjection of India is one of the strongest bases of English capitalism. Of the 450 millions of the British empire, 320 millions are Indian. Historically, the plunder of India during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was one of the principal sources of primitive accumulation which made the development of capitalism in Britain and the industrial revolution possible. In the nineteenth century India was the principal market for British manufactures. In the twentieth century India is becoming rapidly industrialised under the control of British capital, which, with the aid of a gigantic irresponsible bureaucratic machine, unparalleled since tsarist Russia, and semislave conditions of labour, is finding more profitable fields of exploitation than at home. Today one-tenth of the British export trade goes to India—more than to any other country—and representing 70 per cent of Indian imports, although already a diminishing amount owing to the development of manufactures in India. British investments in India are estimated at one thousand million pounds, or more than the total in all the dominions put together. This

role of India in British capitalist economy is relatively increasing in proportion as the control of the dominions and hold on foreign countries are weakening. The control of India is the keystone of British imperialism.

The importance of the Indian national struggle in the world fight against imperialism is thus sufficiently obvious. It is not only a question of three hundred millions, or one-fifth of the human race, struggling for freedom from foreign domination, which is the necessary first step to social freedom. It is also the question that here in India and in China are the two decisive areas of the national struggle against world imperialism, and that in the present epoch the international working class cannot free itself by purely local struggles in the home territory without at the same time overthrowing the imperialist domination of subject nations which is today the strongest basis of modern capitalism. For this reason the fortunes of the Indian national struggle are of vital concern to the international working class.

At the present day, for the British working class, Indian developments—always in fact closely linked up with their fortunes—have come to the front as of vivid and immediate concern for an additional reason. Previously, the subjection and poverty of the Indian masses was one of the concealed bases of the higher standards of the British workers. Today an opposite process is developing with extreme rapidity. The industrialisation of India under British control—today India is officially classified as one of the eight leading industrial nations of the world—means that British capital, in proportion as the home position becomes difficult, is using its control of cheap labour in India to open up enterprises there and undercut the British workers, and then on the basis of this competition to lower wages at home. This process began in the jute industry, the greater part of which has been transferred from Dundee to India during the past half century; signs of similar tendencies are visible in iron and steel, engineering and other directions. In consequence, the hastening of Indian emancipation and the weakening of British dominion in India have become an urgent and

immediate concern for the British working class; and every day this alliance of interest is becoming more widely understood.

(From the Preface)

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To understand the problems of the Indian national struggle, it is necessary to understand something of the essential conditions of the situation. The mass of the Indian people, the peasants and industrial workers, constituting nine-tenths of the population, are held at present under a double yoke. There is first the imperialist domination of the British bourgeoisie who control the apparatus of government and subject the people to the exploitation of largescale British capital through the mechanism of taxation, finance and banking, loans and debt, the ownership of the railways, of the greater part of the industrial enterprises, of the plantations and mines, and the operations of the large importing companies. Then in addition there are the Indian landlords and bourgeoisie, ruling princes, merchants, manufacturers, lawyers, small traders and moneylenders, who prey upon the people under the aegis of the British government and exact their share of the spoils. From this double yoke, arresting social developments, follows the intense poverty and misery of the mass of the Indian people, who have been reduced to the lowest level of any country in the world.

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The Indian upper classes, the ruling princes, landlords and bourgeoisie, exist under the protection of the British bourgeoisie, as subordinate sharers in the spoil. The ruling princes are puppets, surviving from a decaying feudal order, and artificially maintained by the British as buttresses of reaction. With rare exceptions, they are reactionary, parasitic, devoted to their British masters and hostile to all Indian aspirations. The landlords have been

in large part created as a class by the British, who in the past established a landlord system where there was none, in order to provide a basis for their rule. The Indian bourgeoisie, of merchants and manufacturers, have risen more recently on a larger basis, and at first in opposition to the British to whom they were rivals; but they have been increasingly drawn closer to the British bourgeoisie, both by the attractive power of large capital, and by the need of governmental protection against mass discontent.

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But in this national struggle arises the problem of the role of the Indian bourgeoisie. The Indian bourgeoisie has played a double role. On the one hand they naturally grudge the lion's share of the imperialist exploiters and their own inferior position; and would not be averse to securing the whole spoils themselves, if that were possible, or at any rate to making use of popular agitation to secure a better bargain for themselves. On the other hand, if there is any sign of a popular movement really developing, such as would inevitably endanger also their own privileges and position, they at once draw in their horns and hasten to the side of the imperialist bourgeoisie and to its guns for protection. Thus the Indian bourgeoisie step forward on the one hand as the true spokesmen and representatives of the national cause, calling on the people to follow them in the name of national unity and freedom and forget all class distinctions. But as soon as a crisis comes and their property is endangered, they speedily sacrifice the national cause to their class interests, and line up with the imperialists in a common counterrevolutionary front. This treacherous role of the Indian bourgeoisie gives rise to the essential problem of the Indian national movement at the present point.

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Any consideration of the modern experience of the na-

tionalist movement must begin with a consideration of the crisis period of 1919-22. This is the turningpoint of the modern movement.

The discussion of this period is fraught with difficulties. The personality of Gandhi has woven its way into the hearts of millions; and personal loyalties, philosophical and religious predilections and political traditions all cut across a clear discussion of the issues.

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It is necessary first of all to recognise clearly the central significance of this period, and the achievement of Gandhi. The central significance of this period consisted in the fact that the national movement became a mass movement. The achievement of Gandhi consisted in that he, almost alone of all the leaders, sensed this and reached out to the masses. This was the first great achievement of Gandhi. He did—at one point—reach the masses.

This positive achievement of Gandhi is bigger than all the idiosyncrasies and weaknesses which may be brought against him, and constitutes his real contribution to Indian nationalism. For the first time within the ranks of nationalist politicians, he pushed beyond the narrow circle of Congress, council, assembly and bureaucratic politics, and endeavoured to bring his message to the millions of peasants and other workers. In the moment of his power, he found his strength; from the moment that he became divorced from them his decline began.

The second great achievement of Gandhi consisted in this, that he brought before the masses a policy of action, of action of the masses.

What was the policy which he brought forward, and which was able to arouse a response from the awakening masses? The policy that he brought forward was the policy of noncooperation to win swaraj, and, in particular, at the height of his agitation the policy of mass civil disobedience.

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The propaganda of noncooperation and mass civil disobedience brought an entirely new character into the nationalist movement which had never before been present save for the limited boycott experiments of the extremists before the war. For the first time it was attempted to call into play the immediate action of the masses of the people in order to force the government to surrender. This was the fact which gave revolutionary meaning to the propaganda of noncooperation in 1920 to 1922.

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Two incidents occurred—at Chauri Chaura and at Bareilly—which revealed the rising temper of the masses. They were two outstanding episodes of conflicts with the authorities on the part of poor peasants and town workers, such as were taking place all over the country. Such episodes have been, in every country and in every great struggle, the symptoms of a mass movement rising to assert itself against an overruling power which uses every form of violence and coercion.

Immediately, on the news of these episodes, that is on the first real signs of the mass activity which they themselves were calling into being, Gandhi and the congress leadership called off the whole movement. By so doing they showed that they were afraid of the mass activity with which they had been playing.

Why were they afraid of the mass activity which was already showing itself the most powerful instrument to overthrow the hated foreign government? The answer is made plain in the resolution, which was carried by the congress committee at Bardoli to call off the movement.

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The congress leadership called off the movement because they were afraid of the awakening mass activity; and they were afraid of the mass activity because it was beginning

to threaten those propertied class interests with which they themselves were closely associated.

By the Bardoli resolution the congress leadership clearly took their stand with the landlords and the British government against the peasants and the masses of the workers. This was the decisive braking of the national front.

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Gandhi failed as a leader of the national struggle because he could not cut himself loose from the upper-class interests and prejudices in which he had been brought up. He could only regard the workers as instruments of labour to be kept in their place. On a famous occasion he declared: "It is dangerous to make use of the factory proletariat." On another occasion he declared: "All are born to serve god's creation, the brahmin, with his knowledge, the kshatriya, with his power of protection, the vaishya, with his commercial ability, the shudra, with his bodily labour."

The "spirituality" of Gandhi is only the expression of this class interest. All parasitic and propertied classes have to weave around themselves a fog of confused language, superstition, traditions, religion, reverence, etc., in order to hide from the masses the fact of their exploitation. The spiritually reactionary propaganda of Gandhi need not further concern us here, save to note the practical bourgeois policy in every actual question that lies behind it.

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The congress leadership of Gandhi was not the direct leadership of the big bourgeoisie. The big bourgeoisie, represented by the moderates and liberals, remained outside the whole campaign of noncooperation because they knew the danger of playing with the masses. But it was a leadership of petty-bourgeois intellectual elements who wished on the one hand to stand forward as leaders of the

masses, but who feared to break with the propertied interests of the bourgeoisie. Therefore they broke down in the moment of crisis, and thereafter showed themselves impotent and bankrupt. Increasingly, despite their own wishes and original professions, they have been dragged into the camp of bourgeois-liberal policy and cooperation with the imperial government—as witnessed in the final surrender of Gandhi to Das's policy of cooperation.

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The Swaraj Party inherited the debacle of gandhism. Gandhism, it was clear, had come to a standstill, and it was necessary to find some sequel. It was possible to develop in two directions. One was to come closer to the peasants and workers, to voice their demands, to organise them, and so to build up a powerful movement. The other was to relapse into the position of an open bourgeois party, endeavouring to bargain with the government for advantageous terms of alliance. These two directions were completely conflicting; although the conflict, first fully revealed in the episode of Gandhi, was only beginning to be realised. An examination of the start of the Swaraj Party will show that at its inception both elements were represented in the expressions and outlook of the new leader at that time, C. R. Das. It was only under the pressure of events that the stronger element, the bourgeois element, was forced to stand out clearly.

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The swaraj leaders who had begun with the language of a revolutionary movement and claiming to be the leaders of the masses, ended as the direct apostles of upper-class interests against the national cause and the defenders of the government against the masses. The bourgeois forces, which had always been the dominating power behind the

Swaraj Party, had overcome the weak and uncertain popular elements.

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For the masses of India the struggle against imperialism is thus simply a part of their struggle towards social liberation, a part of the struggle against exploitation. The national struggle is thus part of the social struggle.

To realise the aim of this national struggle, the Indian people need to liberate themselves completely from imperialist domination—i.e. to achieve complete independence. Nothing less than this can afford the possibility of throwing off imperialist exploitation.

The aim of the national struggle is therefore complete independence for India from imperialist rule or connection.

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The Indian people in fighting for "swaraj" will strive to win the greatest possible social emancipation, to develop the national revolution as rapidly as possible into the social revolution. The Indian people will only begin to free themselves in reality in proportion as they win power into their own hands, into the hands of the workers and peasants.

The primary necessity for the workers and peasants is to secure the possibility of further advance—to secure, that is to say, the rights of combination, of agitation and of the press, of public meeting, of universal suffrage and the abolition of hereditary privilege. To this extent the immediate objective will be the type of national-democratic state.

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The first necessity of any widespread popular agitation and organisation is the winning of the elementary civil

rights of free speech, press, meeting and combination. The fight for these is the first basic fight which should unite all sections of the national movement.

The fundamental rights to be fought for comprise:

1. Freedom of speech.
2. Freedom of the press.
3. Freedom of association.
4. Universal suffrage.
5. Abolition of hereditary privileges and caste distinctions.
6. Abolition of all religious and racial discrimination.

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The only final solution of the land question lies in the social ownership of land and the organisation of largescale production, thus eliminating waste, parasitic tribute, unscientific tillage and the barbaric squandering of labour without adequate equipment. This requires the expropriation of the big landowners and the nationalisation of the land. But the organisation of collective largescale production is necessarily a long process, requiring many stages; and it is necessary first to assist the peasantry to reach a stronger economic basis in order to be able to develop wider cooperative organisation.

The first need of the peasantry and landless labourers is land. The great estates must be expropriated and handed over to the peasantry and landless labourers as has been done to a greater or less extent in many European countries since the war.

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As an immediate step all existing rents need to be reduced; and all arbitrary exactions whether of forced labour, provision of food, or special levies (for marriage festivals, hunting and the like) should be abolished. The government land revenue, which has heavily increased, needs

to be brought down to a fixed minimum proportion of the actual produce.

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The national program should demand the prohibition of foreclosures, the legal limitation of interest and the provision of cheap credit. The existing burden of debt might with advantage be brought before the review of special courts, on which the peasants should be directly represented, which should have power materially to scale down amounts outstanding.

The further need is to provide direct assistance for the cultivators and for the development of agriculture. This can only be done through the state. The peasantry have neither the means nor the facilities to avail themselves of modern implements; and they are too weak economically even to be able to develop rapidly enough on a cooperative basis. The state should make available for the peasantry both cheap credit and also actual depots of agricultural machinery which could be hired out, and actually assist in the development and modernisation of agriculture. The national movement should stand for the establishment and recognition of village councils (equally elected by all the peasants and labourers in a village), which should have wide legal organising functions as well as control of the conditions of land tenure.

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The national program should demand abolition of all indirect taxation and its replacement by a steeply graduated progressive income tax.

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The national movement should support the demands of the workers for: (1) a minimum wage and eight-hour day for all wage-workers; (2) the abolition of child labour and

the prohibition of women's labour in dangerous trades; (3) the establishment of factory protective legislation and workers' compensation on European standards; (4) the establishment of full trade-union rights, on the existing English model, and full workingclass rights of economic and political organisation.

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The national movement should stand for a free universal medical service and the building up of an adequate system of hospitals, maternity centres and dispensaries. This should be combined with a program of public health propaganda.

At the same time, housing schemes must be pressed for, which can provide a minimum standard of housing for the industrial workers at a low rent.

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The demand for free universal primary education is an indispensable plank for a national platform.

At the same time technical, secondary and higher education are all vital to national development, and all three require specific attention in any educational program.

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The question of language needs careful attention. While no encouragement should be given to policies of cultural isolation, it is common experience that education up to and including university standard can only be satisfactorily received in a student's own tongue; and it is not until higher or graduate standards are reached that a transition can be made to other tongues for purposes of wider contact. In the schools, secondary as well as primary, this clearly applies; and the question of "language universities" is worth consideration.

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Thus a national organisation may actually be built up most effectively on a basis of peasants' associations and

unions, of workers' unions, of young nationalist groups (including students and young workers) and so forth. These, linked together in some type of federal democratic association with a strong central leading body, could constitute the framework of a people's party for the prosecution of the national struggle.

There exist, both within the Congress and in the Swaraj Party, as well as outside, elements which are seeking for a forward program, which recognise the dead-stop reached by the old lines of leadership and the danger of a complete surrender, but which are still seeking for the right positive line of advance.

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It is an amazing example of the intellectual isolation which it has been the policy of imperialism to foster in India that every one of the exploded populist errors, of thirty years ago in Russia, should be revived today in nationalist circles in India.

The signals in India are a hundred times clearer than they were in Russia thirty years ago. Capitalism has reached a much more advanced stage of development. The class struggle has reached a more intense point. The development of largescale industry of the most modern European or American type is already visible, with all its consequences. The impoverishment and revolutionising of the peasantry is even clearer in India than it was in Russia. A stage has even been reached, in the political situation since 1922, in which the discrediting of the bourgeoisie for leadership, and their collapse in the face of the developing social struggle have already become evident. The whole situation is pointing more and more clearly to the future role of the working class, which will lead and organise the peasantry in the common struggle for emancipation.

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The Indian workingclass movement, which is now able to start on the basis of full world experience, can from

the outset put before itself the aim of the conquest of political power, and combine the daily economic struggle with this aim.

To accomplish this aim of the conquest of political power the workers require appropriate organisation. The trade unions are not enough in view of this aim. There is needed a revolutionary workers' party which shall organise and centralise the struggle for the conquest of political power. The aim of such a party needs to be, not simply the capture of a few seats in some legislature assembly, but the leadership of the workingclass struggle at every stage. The party of the workers and the trade unions alike need to be based upon the program and policy of the class struggle and to work in closest cooperation. It is the province of the trade unions to organise the widest masses of the workers. It is the province of the party to organise the most militant and selfsacrificing elements of the working class who are capable of giving leadership to the whole of their class. The achievement of such a revolutionary workers' party is the supreme point of working-class organisation, and the necessary condition of reaching to the workers' society of the future.

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11. THE FUTURE OF INDIAN POLITICS

M. N. ROY

(Excerpts)

Part I: THE ECONOMICS OF COMPROMISE

(1) *The Social Basis of Imperialism*

Bourgeois nationalism in India has ended in a complete compromise with imperialism, as was predicted years ago

by those who judged the situation with Marxian realism. Side by side with national antagonism, class antagonism developed during the postwar period of the Indian nationalist movement. Gradually the latter antagonism became predominant over the former. The process of class differentiation inside the nationalist ranks caused constant political regrouping. The predominating tendency was towards the formation of a bourgeois bloc of constitutional opposition. Imperialism helped this tendency very cleverly and successfully with the policy of "economic concession and political repression"—economic concession to Indian capitalism to draw the nationalist bourgeoisie closer to the British government, thus isolating the middleclass nationalists, whose comparatively radical political activities were dealt with by the firm hand of repressive laws. The move to the right—towards compromise with imperialism—was marked by two very distinct stages: first, divorce of the bourgeois-nationalist movement from the most revolutionary social forces—workers and peasants; second, the schism between the big bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie. The first was accomplished in 1923 when the revolutionary program of mass passive resistance to imperialist autocracy was abandoned in favour of constitutional parliamentary obstruction. The organisation of the Swaraj Party marked the separation of the nationalist movement from revolutionary mass action.

By the end of 1925 the schism between the big bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie became wide enough to split the Swaraj Party, which for two years had served the purpose of a bridge between the constitutionalism of the big bourgeoisie and the revolutionary inclinations of the petty bourgeoisie.*

The split in the Swaraj Party means the burning of that

* Since this was written, the defection of the Mahratta responsivists has culminated in a complete split of the Swaraj Party on the lines of class interests of the big bourgeoisie and of the lower middle class.

bridge. The big bourgeoisie have decided to shake off the encumbrance of the petty-bourgeois political vagaries, notwithstanding the fact that the latter have served their purpose. The split in the Swaraj Party removes the last obstacle to a happy compromise between the Indian bourgeoisie and British imperialism, of course under the hegemony of the latter.

The desire for this compromise is not onesided. British imperialism is very desirous of stabilising the economic and political situation in India. It has long been recognised by far-seeing imperialist statesmen that a country like India cannot be kept long in subjugation without the active and willing support of an influential section of the native population. In other words, imperialism must have a social basis in India. Until the earlier years of the twentieth century, British imperialism in India relied upon two native factors: one positive, the other negative. The first was the loyalty of the reactionary landed aristocracy which had been partly created and partly bolstered up by the British conquerors. The second was the passivity of the masses. Relying on these two factors, British imperialism could afford to ignore the feeble demands of the rising bourgeoisie and the revolutionary dissatisfaction growing among the petty-bourgeois intellectuals. Besides, until the world war, the economics of imperialism demanded that India (as well as other colonial countries) should be held in a state of industrial backwardness in order to supply a market and raw materials for the metropolitan industries. Consequently the relation between imperialism and the colonial bourgeoisie was that of antagonism. This antagonism found its expression in the nationalist movement. But there was another economic consideration which made the nationalism of the Indian bourgeoisie weak and compromising even in those days. Owing to the forced industrial backwardness of the country, the Indian bourgeoisie were mostly engaged in distributing trade which was dependent on British imperialism both politically and economically. Politically, because security and expansion of

trade required a stable government and order in the country, conditions which had been fulfilled by the British. Economically, because both the export and import trade being practically a British monopoly, the Indians engaged in it were economic vassals of imperialism. The nationalist movement inspired and headed by such a weak social class did not disturb imperialism. The terrorist secret societies, through which the growing discontent of the unemployed and unemployable petty intellectuals was spasmodically expressed, could be dealt with successfully by brutal repression.

The situation remained more or less like this till the eve of the world war. Soon after the outbreak of the world conflagration, it became evident that British domination in India could no longer be maintained on the old narrow social basis. The social basis of British rule could be widened and deepened only by drawing at least the upper strata of the nationalist bourgeoisie within the economic orbit of imperialism. This necessitated a change in the economic policy of imperialism. Still another factor contributed to that change, and precipitated it. The exigencies of war obliged Britain to relax her grip on the economic life of India. Thus began the new era when imperialist interests were so changed as to render an agreement with the Indian bourgeoisie desirable and profitable.

(2) *Dividing the Spoils*

All along, the grievance of the Indian bourgeoisie had been that the British government impeded the industrial development of India. The two main planks of the nationalist platform were fiscal autonomy and administrative reforms. The demand for fiscal autonomy grew energetic in proportion to the accumulation of capital in the hands of the Indian bourgeoisie. The phenomenal growth of British trade with India had unavoidably caused a proportionate accumulation of capital in the hands of the Indian mercantile class connected with that prosperous trade...

It will be noticed that the characteristic of this large volume of trade has always been a considerable excess of export over import. In countries in a normal economic (capitalist) condition, such a continual favourable balance of trade indicates a state of "national prosperity". But in India it was not the case. "National wealth" does not belong to the nation. It is the property of that social class which controls the economic life of the nation. The economic life of India not being controlled by the native bourgeoisie, the accumulated wealth produced by the people (workers and peasants) did not contribute to the capitalist development of the country.

...A portion of the surplus exports was paid up by the import of gold and silver which was mostly absorbed by the upper classes of Indian society. The remaining portion went to the account of liquidating Indian obligations to England for the benefit of British rule...

Thus the portion of the surplus value extracted from the Indian masses only through the unpaid amount of raw produce exported, during the period 1874-1914, in terms of money amounted to 14,440 million rupees, of which 6650 million fell to the share of the Indian bourgeoisie. This wealth could not be converted into capital sufficiently profitable by investment in land and trade—two main avenues of exploitation open to the Indian bourgeoisie. The search for a more lucrative industrial outlet became ever more persistent and crystallised in the nationalist demand for protection to native industry and fiscal autonomy...

...It is remarkable—and therein lay the germ of subsequent compromise with imperialism—that the political plank of the nationalist platform was not half as strong as the economic one of fiscal autonomy.

What is meant by fiscal autonomy? It means that India should be autonomous (of Britain) in her financial and trade operations. It is evident that the autonomy in financial and commercial spheres cannot be effective without a simultaneous political autonomy. So long as Britain

remains the dominating political force—the state power—in India, she will not permit the Indian bourgeoisie to readjust the financial and trade relations in a way harmful to British interest. But significantly enough, the nationalism of the Indian bourgeoisie never demanded political freedom—it does not do so even now.

By fiscal autonomy the Indian bourgeoisie meant a wider latitude to exploit Indian labour by converting their accumulated wealth into industrial capital. However, in course of time, they realised the impossibility of winning even that much economic freedom without some political power. In 1916, as condition for India's full support to Britain in carrying on the war to victory, the nationalist bourgeoisie demanded selfgovernment (within the empire) and an immediate grant of fiscal autonomy. Imperialism could no longer remain indifferent to that demand made in a very critical moment. The first step towards agreement was taken, to be followed by others in quick succession.

(3) *The New Economic Policy of Imperialism*

The demands of the Indian bourgeoisie coincided and even had been preceded by additional and unexpected events giving rise among the imperialist statesmen to a tendency towards an agreement with the Indian bourgeoisie even before the latter definitely formulated their attitude in 1916. The then viceroy, Lord Hardinge, in a dispatch to the secretary of state for India, in the latter part of 1915, had recommended the policy of fostering the industrial growth of India. He said:

"It is becoming increasingly clear that a definite and selfconscious policy of improving the industrial capabilities of India will have to be pursued after the war, unless she is to become more and more a dumping ground for the manufactures of other nations... The attitude of the Indian public towards this important question is unani-

mous, and cannot be left out of account... After the war, India will consider herself entitled to demand the utmost help which her government can afford to enable her to take her place, so far as circumstances permit, as a manufacturing country" (Lord Hardinge's dispatch to the Secretary of state for India, in 1915).

Acting on this recommendation of the viceroy and in order to meet the demands of the nationalist bourgeoisie, the British government set up the Indian industrial commission "to examine and report upon the possibilities of further industrial development in India". A nationalist leader and three foremost Indian capitalists sat on the commission with representatives of imperialism. After two years of exhaustive investigation into the sources of capital, raw material, market and labour, the commission recommended among other subsidiary things:

"(1) That in future the government must play an active part in the industrial development of the country.

"(2) That India produces all the raw materials necessary for the requirements of a modern community, but is unable to manufacture many of the articles and materials essential alike in times of peace and war. Therefore it is vital for the government to ensure the establishment in India of those industries whose absence exposes us to grave danger in the event of war.

"(3) That modern methods should be introduced in agriculture so that labour now wastefully employed would be set free for industries.

"(4) That the policy of laissez-faire in industrial affairs, to which the government clung so long, should be abandoned.

"(5) That the establishment of industrial banks should be encouraged by means of government financing, if necessary.

"(6) That the necessity for securing the economic safety of the country, and the inability of the people to secure it without the cooperation of the government, are appar-

ent. Therefore the government must adopt a policy of energetic intervention in industrial affairs."

While the commission was still carrying on its investigation, practical effect was given to the recommendations that it made subsequently. In 1917 the Indian munitions board was created "to develop Indian resources to meet the necessities of war and the situation created by the war". The (English) chairman of the industrial commission, who had always been an advocate of the point of view that industrial development of India would strengthen the basis of imperialism, became the head of that newly-created state organ which gave a tremendous impetus to Indian industry. The munitions board worked on the following lines:

"(1) Direct purchase in India of articles and materials of all kinds needed for the army, the civil departments and railways.

"(2) The diversion of all orders for articles and materials from the United Kingdom and elsewhere to the manufacturers in India.

"(3) The giving of assistance to individuals and firms in order to establish new industries or develop old ones."

The result was reflected in the increased share of manufactured articles in export trade from 24 per cent to 31 per cent, reached in two years. Moreover orders for large transport and military supplies were placed with Indian manufacturers who were given state aid to fulfil the orders. The growth of the Tata Iron and Steel Company is indicative of the situation in general...

The next step towards agreement was the scheme of constitutional reforms prepared jointly by the secretary of state for India, Montagu, and the viceroy, Lord Chelmsford. They proposed to give the Indian bourgeoisie and higher professional classes a share in the legislative and administrative authority of the country. The main features of the reforms were: (1) modification of the control of the Indian government by the British parliament; (2)

creation of central and provincial legislatures with an elected majority; (3) extension of the franchise to include the entire bourgeoisie and the upper strata of the petty bourgeoisie; (4) increase of the number of Indian members of the viceroy's executive council (and appointment of Indian ministers to the provincial governors in addition to executive councillors, both English and Indian); (5) transfer of local selfgovernment to the Indians; (6) opening of the higher positions in civil services to Indians, etc., etc.

These political reforms (essentially very inadequate), together with the recognition of the right of Indian capital, fully satisfied the upper strata of the Indian bourgeoisie. Three years after the demand for full selfgovernment (within the empire) had been put forward by the united nationalist movement, the Moderate Party, representing the big industrialist and commercial classes, accepted in 1919 the very inadequate measure of selfgovernment granted by the government of India act. Economic concessions made under the pressure of war exigencies satisfied them. The recommendations of the industrial commission and the steps taken for their fulfilment meant to the big bourgeoisie, represented by the Moderate Party, more than the reforms granted by the government of India act. The upper strata of the bourgeoisie not only broke away from the National Congress but fully cooperated with the government to suppress the postwar revolutionary movement.

On the economic aspect, the Montagu-Chelmsford scheme of constitutional reform expressed the following opinion:

"As the desirability of industrial expansion became clearer, the government of India fully shared the desire of the Indian leaders to secure the economic advantages that would follow the local manufacture of raw products. English theories as to the appropriate limits of the state's activity are inapplicable to India. We believe that this is true in case of industries, and that if the resources of the

country are to be developed, the government must take action.”

It is to be noted that the concessions made were not forced by the demand of the Indian bourgeoisie alone. Two other factors of very great importance asserted themselves on the situation. They were (1) exigencies of the war, and (2) necessity of widening the social basis of imperialism. Still another factor came into play subsequently. That was the crisis of world capitalism caused by the war.

Towards the close of the world war, the negative factor—passivity of the masses—upon which British rule in India had mainly relied, almost disappeared. In spite of the maturing rapprochement between imperialism and the nationalist bourgeoisie, the country was in a state of revolt. The necessity of widening and deepening the social basis of British rule in India by winning over the native bourgeoisie became imperative. The reform act of 1919 was passed by the British parliament to meet the situation. But the first great revolutionary expression of Indian nationalism could not be altogether suffocated by an act of parliament. A few years of disturbances were to follow. The revolutionary upheaval of 1919-21, however, did not hinder the process of agreement. On the contrary, the fear of revolution drove the Indian bourgeoisie into the arms of imperialism.

The appearance of tremendous revolutionary forces on the scene encouraged the petty bourgeoisie, whose position would be scarcely improved by the reforms, to oppose the reforms. Even a section of the bourgeoisie joined that opposition. But the new imperialist policy of steady economic concession to the Indian bourgeoisie, in course of time, knocked the bottom out of the opposition which took the form of boycott of the reformed legislatures. It may once more be emphasised that the policy of concession was forced upon imperialism by two considerations entirely independent of the demand of the Indian bourgeoisie. They were (1) to enlist the services of the nationalist bourgeoisie in the attempt to suppress the revolu-

tionary uprising of the Indian masses for freedom, and (2) to overcome the postwar crisis of capitalism by creating new markets and tapping the sources of cheap labour.

As a further encouragement to the process of Indian industrialisation, in December 1919, the government moved a resolution in the legislative assembly, appointing a commission to give practical shape to the recommendations of the Indian industrial commission. The resolution says:

"The most obvious and direct form of assistance which the government can give to the industries of the country is by the purchase of supplies required for the public services so far as possible in the country itself."

This measure to advance the interests of native capitalism was taken immediately after the most powerful section of the Indian bourgeoisie had broken away from the nationalist movement. It was obviously intended to show that it paid to cooperate with imperialism even on the basis of very inadequate political reforms. Besides, British capital invested or about to be invested in India, not as previously, but for building manufacturing industries, was influencing the economic policy of imperialism.

Referring to the cause and consequences of the establishment of the Indian stores department, the British trade commission in India wrote in 1920:

"In the first place, both the Indian and also the non-official European members of the legislature are determined that, in future, all purchases of stores for government requirements shall be made in India and that all tenders shall be called for in India and in rupees. These claims have been met by the government of India to some extent. The revised store rules permit the newly-organised Indian stores department at Delhi/Simla to purchase almost unlimited quantities from stocks held in India or in the course of shipment. They also sanction purchases of machinery and plant from the Indian branches of British manufacturers or from their technical agents. There seems to be little doubt that the new Indian stores department will rapidly increase in importance and that the

centre of purchasing influence, so far as important stores are concerned, will be transferred from London to India."

Already in 1918, the government had declared they would place an order for 3000 railway wagons with Indian manufacturers annually for ten years, provided that the prices were not higher than the prices at which wagons could be imported from other countries. A contract was made with the Tata Company for the supply of 10,000 tons of steel plates annually for a period of ten years. The budget of 1922-23 allotted 1,500,000,000 rupees for the rehabilitation of the railways. On the motion of Sir Vithaldas Thakersey, a leading Indian industrialist and financier, the legislative assembly passed a resolution appointing a committee to investigate "what steps should be taken by the government of India to encourage the establishment of the necessary industries so that as large an amount as possible of the railway rehabilitation allotment be spent in India".

(4) India Adopts Protection

In its report the railway committee cited instances of the failure of Indian manufacturers to compete successfully with the manufacturers of other countries. Consequently the opinion of the committee was "that industries newly started in India for the manufacture of railway materials of a fabricated character cannot, in the initial stage, compete *without assistance* against established industries abroad". As a logical consequence of this admission, the legislative assembly passed a bill in June 1924 granting bounty on the manufacture of railway wagons in India until the year 1929.

All these measures were heading towards protectionism—the summum bonum of Indian nationalist demand. To the dissatisfaction of the Indian bourgeoisie, the industrial commission of 1916 had been precluded from touching the tariff question. Naturally British imperialism had been

very reluctant to equip the Indian bourgeoisie with a weapon that could eventually be turned against it. But events were moving fast. The decision to purchase railway material, structural steel, etc., manufactured in India when the amount manufactured could obviously not supply the demand, was an invitation for British capital to build industries in India. The concession to the Indian bourgeoisie was incidental. The process of accumulation of capital in the industries in Britain was on the decline; should British capital not find other sources of investment which could lead to accumulation setting off the decline at home, the postwar crisis of British imperialism would be decidedly fatal. Further, the Indian market was rapidly ceasing to be a British monopoly. It was invaded from all sides—United States, Japan, Germany and Belgium taking the lead..

The greatest portion of the 1,500,000,000 rupees allotted (in 1921) for the rehabilitation of railways was spent in England but in the teeth of persistent Indian demand that supplies for Indian railways should be bought in the cheapest market. Eventually Indian orders would go to other countries by the sheer law of competition (the basic principle of capitalist economy), unless Britain permitted India herself to supply them.

British manufacturers were being dislodged approximately at the corresponding rate from other Eastern markets. To manufacture in India was the only possible way out of the impasse. Cheap labour and raw materials and great saving on the cost of transport taken together would enable the British capitalists not only to hold their own in the eastern market; the enormous profit made might also enable them to tide over the industrial crisis at home.

Soon after the conclusion of the war, a number of iron and steel manufacturing companies were registered in India, all connected with British firms. The principal ones were:

(1) Indian Iron and Steel Company, Ltd.; capital Rs 5,000,000. Registered in 1918. Projected production 180,

000 tons of pig iron a year. Promoted by Burn and Co, a British engineering and shipbuilding firm in India.

(2) The United Steel Corporation of Asia Ltd, capital Rs 150,000,000. Registered in 1921. Projected annual production 300,000 tons of pig iron and 200,000 tons finished steel to be increased in a few years to 700,000 and 450,000 tons respectively. Promoted by Cammel, Laird and Co, of Sheffield.

(3) The Peninsula Locomotive Co, capital Rs 6,000,000, held partly by Kerr, Stuart and Co, of Stoke-on-Trent, and partly by Indian capitalists. Will be able to produce 299 locomotives a year to begin with.

The lead given by these firms was sure to be followed by others. (It has been proved to be so by subsequent events.) Thus tariff walls raised by the Indian government would no longer operate against British interests. They would protect the Indian key industry largely promoted and owned by British capital, with native capital participating.

There was another reason which obliged British imperialism to accede to the Indian nationalist demand for protection by a high tariff. This was a negation of the traditional policy on which British trade relations with India had always been determined. In the interest of the home manufacturers Britain imposed upon India the policy of free trade. In the case of India, free trade means free exploitation by British imperialism. The British manufacturers would not tolerate the least obstacle to be placed on the free import of their commodities to India.

Financial difficulties in the postwar years had obliged the Indian government to raise import duties to a height which, for practical purposes, had protectionist effects. From an average 3 per cent advalorem levied before the war for revenue purposes, the import duties had been raised from 11 to 15 per cent. Judged from this side, what remained to be done was to call the spade a spade—come out officially in favour of protection for India and

thus satisfy the traditional demand of the nationalist bourgeoisie.

In the beginning of 1921 the following resolution, moved by Lallubhai Samaldas (an Indian merchant and financier) was passed by the legislative assembly:

"This council recommends to the governor-general-in-council that his majesty's government be addressed through the secretary of state with a prayer that the government of India be granted full fiscal autonomy subject to the provisions of the government of India act."

Immediately after this resolution had been passed the secretary of state for India in replying to a deputation from Lancashire (which had all along been the sturdy opponent to India's fiscal freedom) declared the decision:

"To give the government of India the right to consider the interests of India first, just as we, without any complaint from any other parts of the empire, and the other parts of the empire without any complaint from us, have always chosen the tariff arrangements which they think best fitted for their needs, thinking of their own citizens first."

This speech was followed by a dispatch, dated 30 June 1921, to the government of India, announcing the decision of the British government to accept the principle of fiscal autonomy.

In October 1921 was appointed a fiscal commission to examine the question of a tariff, under the presidency of Sir Ibrahim Rahimtoolla—a great Bombay millowner. Out of the eleven members of the commission, seven were Indians, all prominent in industrial, commercial and nationalist political fields. One unprecedented feature of the commission was that it had only one English official on it. The divergence between the interests of British and Indian capital had been so reduced that mutual confidence and joint action was possible.

The fiscal commission submitted its report at the end of the next year. Basing itself on the conclusions "the industrial development of India has not been commensurate

with the size of the country, its population and its natural resources, and that a considerable development of Indian industries would be very much to the advantage of the country as a whole", the commission recommended, among other things:

"(1) That the government of India adopt a policy of protection with discrimination.

"(2) That a permanent tariff board be set up to consider the claims of particular industries for protection.

"(3) That raw materials and machinery be admitted free of duty.

"(4) That the excise duty on the Indian cotton industry be removed.

"(5) That no obstacle be raised to the free inflow of foreign capital, but that government monopolies or concessions be granted only to companies incorporated and registered in India with rupee capital, and with Indians on their directorates."

Five Indian members of the commission (the president himself included among them) did not consider the verdict of the commission wide enough and supplemented the general report with a minute of dissent. The essence of their point of view will be interesting and useful to note, since it represents the demand of the most radical section of the Indian bourgeoisie. The dissenting minority wrote:

"(1) There should be an unqualified pronouncement that the fiscal policy best suited to India is protection.

"(2) It is a mere commonplace to say that a rich India is a tower of strength to the empire, while an economically weak India is a source of weakness... India would have been of far greater help to England during the war if the policy of protection had been adopted at least a generation ago... This (revision of the tariff policy) would have been to her great advantage and would have been beneficial to the empire..."

India, inhabited by a fifth of the human race, can be of tremendous value, economic and political, both to herself

and to the empire, if development proceeds on lines best suited to her conditions.

On the question of inflow of foreign capital, the minority appeared to differ from the view expressed in the general report. But this is what they said:

"We are unanimous in thinking that in the interest not only of the consumer, but of the economic advancement of the country, it is essentially necessary that industrialisation should proceed at a rapid pace... We will, therefore, state at once, that we would raise no objection to foreign capital in India obtaining the benefit of protective policy, provided suitable conditions are laid down to safeguard the essential interests of India."

The conditions recommended by the minority, however, are the same as stated in the general report, namely: incorporation of companies in India with rupee capital and proportionate Indian directors.

In February 1923 the government of India declared the acceptance of the principle of discriminating protection recommended by the fiscal commission as a whole. The government resolution unanimously adopted by the legislative assembly accepted "in principle the proposition that the fiscal policy of the government of India may legitimately be directed towards fostering the development of industries in India".

A few months later, acting upon the recommendations of the fiscal commission, the government appointed the tariff board consisting of three members, two of whom were Indians. Thus an agreement was reached between the Indian bourgeoisie and British imperialism on the vital question of economic antagonism. Without vitally injuring imperialist monopoly, considerable satisfaction was given to Indian capitalism at the expense of the masses.

The tariff board began, of course, with the iron and steel industry. The Tatas immediately came forward with the demand for a 33.5 per cent duty on imported steel manufactures. On the recommendation of the tariff board, the government in May 1924 brought before the

legislative assembly the steel industry (protection) bill which set up a tariff varying from 20 to 25 per cent on fabricated iron and steel entering the country, and a large bounty on the production in India of railway wagons. The bill authorised the government to raise the duty in case one or more of the dutiable articles would be found to be imported into India at such a price as would be likely to render ineffective the protection intended. The bill passed the legislative assembly with very little opposition. The Swaraj Party broke its vow of obstruction and voted with the government.

The effect of protection on the Indian iron and steel industry can be judged from the following estimated growth in the production of the Tata concern behind a tariff wall. Total production in 1923 was 121,000 tons. It will increase to 250,000, 335,000 and 390,000 tons in the three succeeding years.

Hardly a year after the passage of the protection act, the Tatas declared that the duties did not give them enough protection and demanded their increase. The government, with the sanction of the assembly, granted the demand not by additional duty, but by a substantial bounty on production to guarantee a fixed margin of profit.

The tariff board then recommended protection for the paper and cement industries and is at present considering the claims of the coalmining industry. Since the industries, whose claims are to be investigated, are suggested by the government, the protection for these industries is a foregone conclusion.

(5) *The Cotton Excise and Foreign Trade*

The climax of the policy, which has transformed the economic relation between the Indian bourgeoisie and British imperialism from antagonism to cooperation, was abolition of the 3.5 per cent excise duty; there has been a duty of 11 per cent on the cotton goods imported, which

duty remains in force. One of the outstanding nationalist grievances has always been "the strangling of India's premier industry in the interest of Lancashire". The phenomenal growth of the Indian cotton industry does not justify this grievance. The industry, with an aggregate capital of Rs 300,000,000 (in round numbers) made a total clear profit of Rs 350,000,000 in the period of three years, 1919-1921. Even when in September 1925, the workers (150,000) employed in the Bombay mills were locked out to enforce a further wage cut of 11.5 per cent (in addition to a 20 per cent cut in 1924) on the pretext of "ruinous" trade depression, not less than half the mills were paying a fairly high rate of dividends. However the abolition of the excise duty removed the last cause of friction between the Indian bourgeoisie and imperialism. The political effect of this step has been to split the nationalist movement along the line dividing the big bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie. The life of the Swaraj Party, which stood with one foot in the camp of the big bourgeoisie and another in the petty-bourgeois camp, is seriously threatened.

This concession again was not made in deference to the demands of the bourgeois-nationalists. Consideration of Britain's own economic interest was there, beside the subtle policy of politically isolating the petty-bourgeois nationalists by showing the Indian capitalists that their economic growth was not only possible, but even could be promoted within the orbit of imperialist economy.

In spite of the enormous growth of native production, India still imports nearly 50 per cent of her textile requirements, which until recently used to be supplied by Lancashire. But in the last years things have changed greatly. Japan has been breaking into the Indian market with alarming rapidity. Her share in the Indian trade increased from 0.3 in 1914 to 9.1 per cent in 1924. In 1925 the proportion was expected to be much greater. England cannot possibly compete with Japanese goods produced by sweated labour.

Indian mills worked by coolie labour can alone do that, and the British bourgeoisie can always participate in the resulting profit by exporting capital to India to be invested in those mills. It is remarkable that before the abolition of the excise duty was declared, the president of the Bombay Millowners' Association, N. N. Wadia, visited England and had conferences with Lancashire millowners. In view of the stormy opposition of Lancashire when the duty on cotton goods imported into India was raised from 7.5 per cent to 11 per cent without a simultaneous increase in the excise duty, the gracious acquiescence of Lancashire in the abolition the small excise duty without touching the comparatively high import duty is remarkable. The explanation of this changed attitude is provided by the following quotation from a statement issued by a joint meeting of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce and Lancashire millowners convened immediately after the announcement abolishing the excise duty.

"If the industrial and general situation in India improves in the way in which it is so much desired, it is clear that the Lancashire industry may hope for better trade as a result. That there is a potential purchasing power in India sufficient to engage the producing power of both Indian and Lancashire industries, cannot be doubted. . . . It is to be hoped that in the new situation now created we may find ourselves moving towards a position where the needs of the Indian market will be met to an increasing extent by her own manufacturers in their class of product, and by Lancashire in the types upon which she will naturally concentrate. Such a state of affairs would satisfy the legitimate aspirations of India, whilst not doing injustice to the Lancashire industry. If this situation, frankly recognised by both parties, could lead to the fostering of a better spirit of mutual sympathy, support and accommodation, we would be prepared to accept any difficulties which may be imposed on Lancashire by the present decision in a generous manner"—(*The Economist*, 5 December 1925).

The situation is obvious: Indian and British capital

made up their age-long quarrel and came to an agreement against the common foe, Japan. Referring to the abolition of the excise duty, *The Economist* (5 December 1925) wrote:

"The fact of the matter is that times have changed. India has now fiscal autonomy, and it is useless for Lancashire to make protests against reductions in excise duties or increase in import duties. It must not be forgotten that this action of the Indian government will probably be a more serious matter for Japan than for this country. Lancashire realises more fully than ever that in the future she will have to concentrate her machinery more and more on the finer makes of cloth, and leave the coarser materials to be made by the mills in the east. During the last few years leading authorities have noticed a desire on the part of Indian consumers of cotton cloth to purchase higher quality goods. If this is maintained and extended as there is reason for thinking that it will be, if the purchasing power of the natives is increased, then cotton manufacturers in this country have nothing to fear. It is primarily desirable that a spirit of friendship and goodwill should exist between the people of this country and of India."

The abolition of the excise duty made a tremendous impression in India. Though reluctant to say so openly, the nationalists generally recognised it as an unmistakable sign of a "change of heart" on the part of Britain; and a "change of heart" was all that the nationalists wanted as the price for their "wholehearted and honourable cooperation" with the British government on the basis of the reformed constitution.

Another very significant event was the appointment of a committee to investigate and commend under what conditions foreign capital should be admitted into India. The report of the committee accepts all the conditions laid down by the minority of the fiscal commission. This means that in the immediate future industrialisation of India will be carried on jointly by Indian and British capital.

It will be interesting to examine the considerations

which induced British imperialism radically to change its economic policy in India, as a byproduct of which change the aspirations of the native bourgeoisie have been to a great extent satisfied. The political consideration has already been mentioned. It is the recognition of the fact that the struggle for national freedom is no longer the political expression of the comparatively weak capitalist and intellectual classes. Its social basis has been enormously widened to include practically the entire population. Its objective program has, therefore, changed from constitutional agitation for economic concession and administrative reform to—revolution. The quarrel between imperialism and the native bourgeoisie was over the division of the surplus-value produced by the Indian masses. It will pay imperialism to lessen its lion's share to tiger's share, rather than to risk the loss of everything. British imperialism acted according to the hindu dictum—"Faced with total destruction, the wise forgo half."

An examination of the economic consideration will, however, show that it will not cost imperialism nearly as much to buy off the services of the Indian bourgeoisie and even the upper stratum of the middle classes, as against the revolutionary danger coming from the masses. As a matter of fact, it will cost nothing.

The interest of British capitalism demands not only a guarding of the Indian market against Japanese and American aggression; a continual extension of the market is also demanded. Markets must be found—created—for the British manufactures consumed in central and eastern Europe before the war. India offers great possibilities in that direction. But the economic ruin of the central European countries greatly reduced the purchasing power of India because the greater part of Indian export used to be taken by those countries. That means, just at the moment when British capitalism wants a bigger market in India, there is a shrinkage in the Indian market. In spite of a rise in the value of the total foreign trade of India (Rs 5,890,000,000 in 1923-24), the volume was 28 per cent

less than in 1914. The reason of this shrinkage is this. While on the average 60 per cent of India's imports come from Britain, about the 60 per cent of her exports go to countries outside the British empire. Since the war most of the European countries, that used to consume such a large portion of Indian exports, bought much less. The situation is illustrated by the following table:

<i>Total Amount of Exports to:</i>	<i>Rupees</i>	
	1914	1922
Austria and Hungary	99,748,000	8,355,000
Belgium	120,648,000	80,032,000
France	176,827,000	98,270,000
Germany	263,558,000	162,777,000
Italy	78,351,000	58,378,000
Russia	24,542,000	35,000

Germany's share went down to as little as 13,859,000 in 1920.

This serious fall in her export trade naturally reflected upon India's ability to import, ultimately hurting the British manufacturers, since the major part of her import comes from Britain. All along, a large surplus of export over import represented the proceeds of imperialist exploitation, because the major portion of that surplus was absorbed to liquidate "India's obligations in Britain". In 1920 the balance of Indian trade (a balance artificially maintained in the interests of imperialism) was upset. Import showed an enormous (890,000,000) excess over exports. Next year the disparity was reduced to 440,000,000 by a corresponding reduction in imports. The situation was extremely alarming for imperialism. There was a heavy deficit in the budget. The representative of the government of India, Charles Innes, informed the imperial economic conference (London, 1923):

"Thanks to the war and disorganisation caused by the war, we sell less and, therefore, we buy less. This decrease of trade hits us in many ways."

Further on the same speaker explained the new economic policy of the government of India. He said:

"I am aware that it has caused some alarm in this country, but if, as we hope, the result of this policy (of protection) is to increase the wealth and productiveness of India, then, those who trade with India have nothing to fear. Already that trade is considerable in volume, but it is small in comparison with the size of the country and the population. In India we have 315 millions of the people—roughly one-fifth of the human race, and if only we can raise the standard of living of these millions and increase their capacity to consume goods, India's potentialities as a factor in international trade and as a market are almost limitless."

In the new state of world economy, it has become impossible for the British capitalists to extract tribute from India in the shape of a large unpaid surplus of export over import. The greater part of the foreign market for Indian produce of raw material has been ruined almost beyond repair. Therefore imperialist plunder must find a different expression. To arrest the shrinkage of British trade with India, caused by the reduction in the latter's export trade, her purchasing power should be otherwise increased. This can be done by raising the standard of living of the Indian people. The standard of living of the Indian people, again, cannot be raised unless the choking grip on her economic life is considerably loosened. On the other hand, since a sufficient market for Indian raw produce cannot be found abroad, it must be created inside the country. This again must lead to industrialisation. Industrialisation of a country with such enormous resources of raw material, cheap labour and potentially unlimited markets, in its turn will open up for British capital new fields guaranteeing the possibility of almost fabulous accumulation. British capital invested in India will at the same time extend the market for the production of home industries.

These are, then, the fundamental considerations which

induced British imperialism to adopt a new colonial policy permitting the growth of Indian capitalism within certain limits.

To sum up, since 1916 the British government has introduced a series of economic measures that are greatly beneficial to the Indian bourgeoisie. Consequently the antagonism between imperialism and Indian capitalism has been, at least for the time being, almost eliminated. The political result of this changed economic relation has been reflected in a steady decline of the nationalist demand, and a pitiable bankruptcy of the mainly petty-bourgeois Swaraj Party whose program reflected purely capitalist interests.

What are the cardinal demands of the nationalist bourgeoisie? Impetus to the industrialisation of the country, fiscal autonomy, protection. All these have been realised incidentally, in consequence of the attempts of British capitalism to overcome the serious postwar crisis by means of a readjustment of the economic basis of the empire. The demand for selfgovernment was put forward on the hypothesis that unless the native bourgeoisie possessed some political power, the program of the free development of Indian capitalism could not be realised. Now it is demonstrated in practice that the economic program of bourgeois nationalism can be realised, in spite of the imperialist opposition to a rapid political change demanded by the petty bourgeoisie. In other words, the bourgeoisie have been convinced that their economic development is possible within the framework of imperialism.

(15) *The People's Party & The Proletariat*

The people's fight for freedom must be led by the party of the people—a party organisation which will be broad enough for all the forces of national revolution. The proletariat will be in it, but it will not be a proletarian party,

nominally or essentially. In this party the proletariat will stand side by side with the petty-bourgeois and peasant masses, as the most advanced democratic class. The petty bourgeoisie, disillusioned by the treachery of capitalist nationalism, are gravitating towards the formation of a revolutionary political organisation to carry the fight for freedom further. But the petty bourgeoisie are incapable of independent political action. Their revolutionary discontent often deviates into the futile channels of conspirative terrorism. The decline of bourgeois-nationalism has given a new impetus to the terrorist organisations. At the same time, the tendency of "going to the masses" is gaining ground among the nationalist intellectuals of advanced views. This tendency has of late manifested itself in attempts to form revolutionary political organisations, essentially nationalist, but nominally proletarian or peasant. Naturally this new orientation towards the working masses is either utopian or very superficial—not based on a thorough grasp of the situation. Nevertheless, it is evident that the petty-bourgeois intellectuals are feeling their "way to the masses". They are beginning to understand that the revolutionary fight for national freedom cannot be organised without the active participation of the working masses, and that the latter cannot be rallied under the banner of freedom unless the movement for that freedom is based on a revolutionary democratic program reflecting the interests of the oppressed classes. This radicalisation of their social outlook will not lead the petty-bourgeois intellectuals straight inside the ranks of a proletarian party. Nor is it desirable that the party of the proletariat should be flooded with nonproletarian elements, even though they take on socialism or communist complexion. The radicalisation of the petty-bourgeois intellectuals—the search for the way to the masses—indicates differentiation in the ranks of bourgeois nationalism. The political consequences of this differentiation will be the organisation of a petty-bourgeois nationalist party with the program of a fight to the finish against imperi-

alist domination and of democratic republicanism. The crystallisation of forces in this direction is not only to be noticed in the petty-bourgeois ranks of the National Congress, but also in the left wing of the Swaraj Party. The consciously bourgeois leaders of the Congress as well as of the Swaraj Party have all along suppressed this revolutionary tendency. For example, in the successive annual sessions of the Congress in the last years, the resolution for the change of the aim of the National Congress from undefined selfgovernment (lately defined as selfgovernment within the British empire) to complete independence, secured an increasing number of votes. In fact the majority of the rank and file would have given the resolution a majority, had the leading machinery not been put into motion to suppress it. In 1924 the resolution got a majority in the subjects committee; but Gandhi, as the president, ruled out its introduction in the plenary session of the Congress. Many provincial conferences adopted resolutions recommending such a change in the congress program; but, to the contrary, the aim of the National Congress was clearly defined as selfgovernment within the British empire last year, and once more emphasised this year. This has created great dissatisfaction among the rank and file. Even in the Swaraj Party, several important members have publicly condemned the "capitalist outlook of the party", and declared that the "party conspired with the vested interests to betray the people". These markedly revolutionary tendencies are bound to crystallise into a party of revolutionary nationalism in the near future.

The task of the proletariat in this situation is to meet the petty-bourgeois nationalist revolutionaries half-way. Left alone, on their own initiative, the petty-bourgeois radical intellectuals will never find their "way to the masses". They are still encumbered with traditional class prejudice which survives economic ruin and political servitude. The very complicated Indian system of land ownership gives the middle classes in several provinces a rather precarious

share in the unearned income from land. As far as the lower strata of the middle classes are concerned, this share is an illusion—it does not save them from economic bankruptcy perpetually verging on starvation. Nevertheless this meagre share in land rent has effectively prevented the petty bourgeoisie as a class from advocating any agrarian reform affecting the system of land ownership. Under such circumstances, the desire of the petty intellectuals “to go to the masses” (swarajist program of village reconstruction) will not take them very near to the peasantry, unless they are drawn into the company of a more fundamentally revolutionary class—the proletariat. Since the petty bourgeoisie will not, and cannot, enter a real proletarian party, the proletariat must enter, even take the initiative of organising a broader party. Ever since 1923 the communists have kept before the country a program of revolutionary nationalism. In spite of the joint efforts of imperialism and the nationalist bourgeoisie to condemn this program as “bolshevism” and thereby terrify the petty-bourgeois nationalists, the fundamental principles of democracy, republicanism, and agrarian revolution contained in that program have enlisted numerous adherents. The slogan of a revolutionary people’s party arouses wide response.

A democratic party of the people with a program of revolutionary nationalism (complete independence, establishment of a republican government, radical agrarian reforms, advanced social legislation, etc.), will bind together all the oppressed classes of contemporary Indian society, namely, the petty bourgeoisie, peasantry, and the proletariat. Under the present conditions, the first two will constitute the overwhelming majority; but the proletariat will act as the conscious vanguard of the democratic army—as the leaven of life of the gigantic mass. In this revolutionary combine of the oppressed classes, the role of the petty-bourgeois intellectuals cannot be overestimated. The proletariat will contribute the revolutionary driving forces; the peasantry will lend their massive weight; and

the petty-bourgeois intellectuals will bring in knowledge and education. Considering the cultural backwardness—general illiteracy—of the working class, an educated ally will be immensely valuable, provided that the intellectual accomplishments of that ally are devoted to quicken the revolutionary consciousness of the oppressed classes. Linked up with the proletariat in the actual and everyday fight, the petty-bourgeois intellectuals will undergo an everquickenng process of radicalisation. They will demand more democratic freedom in such a revolutionary atmosphere than they would do alone. Pushed by the proletariat, the petty bourgeoisie will also go further towards agrarian revolution, thus drawing the peasant masses into the struggle for democratic national freedom.

For years India has been seething with growing agrarian discontent. But no political expression has been given to this revolutionary factor. A party of agrarian revolution, in the democratic sense, must appear as the organ through which the peasant masses will be actively drawn in the fight for national freedom. Such a revolutionary nationalist party will fight under a program of agrarian revolution. It will unite the petty bourgeoisie and the peasantry in a democratic struggle under the leadership of the proletariat. It will be a party representing the majority of the people and actively supported by them. It will fight for popular freedom. It will be the people's party.

The future of Indian politics will be an intensified fight for national liberation with revolutionary democratic ideals, under the standard of a people's party. The proletariat, led by its own party—the Communist Party—will exercise hegemony in this revolutionary struggle for democratic national freedom.

The Future of Indian Politics

Published by R. Bishop, London

V. The Workers' & Peasants' Party emerges

12. ALL BENGAL PEASANTS' CONFERENCE

2nd Session—Krishnanagar—Nadia

(6-7 February 1926)

RESOLUTION

1. For the protection and furtherance of the interests of the peasants and workers, the conference herewith resolves to organise a Peasants' and Workers' Party in the following way:

*Proposed by—Faizuddin Hussain.
(Mymensingh)*

*Seconded by—Brajnath Das
(Bagra)*

BENGAL PEASANTS' AND WORKERS' PARTY

Objects and Rules

Constitution

1. *Name:* Bengal Peasants' and Workers' Party.
2. *Object:* The object of the party is the attainment of swaraj in the sense of complete independence of India

based on the political, social and economic equality of women and men.

3. *Means*: Nonviolent mass movement, together with the use of force, will be the main means for the attainment of the abovementioned object.

4. *Membership*: Any person above the age of 18 years who will subscribe to the object, constitution and program of the party can become a member, subject to the approval of the central executive committee. Members of this party are not precluded from joining the Congress, the Swaraj Party or any other party as long as the programs of these parties also include the protection and furtherance of the interests of workers and peasants.

5. *Subscription*: Each individual member of the party shall pay an annual subscription of rupee one. In the case of the individual member being a worker or peasant, the annual subscription will be one anna. The executive committee may exempt anybody from subscription if it thinks so desirable.

6. *Central Working Committee*: This committee will consist of not more than fifteen members. One or more members of the committee will be assigned to take the responsibility for the following departments: (1) propaganda, (2) finance, (3) party organisation, (4) working class, (5) peasants, (6) legislative bodies.

7. *Executive Committee*: There shall be an executive committee of the party. This committee will be elected at the annual conference of the party. The executive committee will elect the central working committee from among its members.

8. *General Council*: There shall be a general council of the Bengal Peasants' and Workers' Party. This council will for the first time be nominated by the executive committee and later it will be elected at the annual conferences, with members from every district.

9. The representatives elected from the districts will

make efforts to hold conferences at the district, sub-division, union and village level.

10. The field of activity of the Bengal Peasants' and Workers' Party will be the entire Bengal, the Bengali-speaking district of Assam and the two Bengali-speaking districts, viz Manbhum and Singhbhum, of Bihar and Orissa.

11. Decision on any other matter not covered by the above constitution may be taken by the executive committee.

Policy and Demands

Whereas experience has fully demonstrated the failure of the noncooperation movement based on the boycott of schools and colleges, law courts and legislative councils, carried out by that class in society whose very existence depends upon the stability of a capitalist system of administration created (in our country) by foreign capitalists;

Whereas it has been proved that (foreign) capitalism cannot be compelled to implement India's national demand by the policy and practice of obstructionism in the Indian legislative assembly and in the provincial councils, and in so far as there is no hope of this policy succeeding even when the legislative assembly, etc. are controlled by the members of the Swaraj Party;

Whereas the unanimous and sharp protest of all the political parties of India against the wholesale arrest and detention without trial of a large number of the leaders of the Indian freedom movement has been unable to produce any change in the mentality of the (foreign) capitalists;

Whereas the foremost political party is opposed to or is unwilling to implement the only policy of noncooperation movement—namely, organising direct resistance action in the form of a countrywide general strike and no-tax, no-rent campaign, through which alone it would be possible

to dislodge the grip of the foreign capitalist from the administration;

Whereas it has been seen that efforts to snatch freedom from unwilling hands with the help of force and terrorism have not succeeded in the past; whereas it is not possible to bring about an improvement in the condition of the masses by flattering the bureaucracy; or whereas the freedom of the unarmed masses, who have been tied down by a thousand bonds with the help of the native army(?), cannot be won by means of secretly collected weapons, and whereas it is proved that the only effective way of winning freedom for an unarmed nation is the use of the dynamic force of a militant mass movement, which is many times more powerful than bombs and pistols;

Whereas in the plan of action of Indian swaraj there is no special mention of property in land, and whereas for a nation which lives mainly by agriculture this is the most important and desired right so that those who till the land also own it, and if there is no freedom to the tiller to own the land, then all other rights would not give him happiness and if he has to work in accordance with the wishes of some one else, who owns the land, then his position would be that of a legalised serf and nothing more;

Whereas India's emancipation cannot be achieved unless the declassed (educated) youth joins the forces of the workers and peasants, therefore, the Bengal Peasants' and Workers' Party herewith declares that there is now only one way to achieve India's national demand and that is to organise those who form eighty per cent of the country's population, viz the workers and peasants, to make them more conscious of their political rights so that they will be able to snatch freedom out of the hands of a few aggressive and selfish individuals, who work only for their own selfinterest and aggrandisement, and for this purpose, and in order to prepare for the abovementioned plan of struggle, the Bengal Peasants' and Workers' Party decides to adopt the following policy and program of activities:

- (1) This party will fight for the interests of the workers

and peasants and for this purpose organise workers and peasants in their respective unions.

(2) The party will cooperate wherever possible with all other parties engaged in national activities.

(3) The party will assist those who fight for the under-mentioned demands of workers and peasants, in their election campaign for legislative bodies and other representative institutions and when elected they will be recognised as the representatives of the party in the legislative bodies.

(a) The elected representatives of the party in the legislative assemblies will formulate their own rules of conduct.

(b) As far as possible, the representatives will strive to achieve the following:

(i) They will continue to vote down the budget as long as the present system of government is not changed and replaced by one based on the acceptance of the fundamental rights due to a human being granted to workers and peasants.

(ii) They will oppose all measures which are designed to strengthen the present capitalist system of government to enhance the power of big landlords on the workers and peasants.

(iii) They will support the promulgation of all such measures and laws which go to strengthen national life and particularly the power of peasants and workers and thus for this reason acts against the rise of the power of the vested interests.

(iv) No elected representative will accept any service under the auspices of the government without the unanimous decision of the members of the party.

Basic Demands

In order to promote the all-round welfare of the workers and peasants:

(1) All modern machine factories, mines, railways, telegraph, tramways and steamers, etc., i.e. all means of public

utility, will be worked not for profit but for the good of the country and will be converted into national property and be run by their respective employees through their organisations.

(2) The ultimate ownership of land will vest in the self-contained autonomous village community, in which all the classes in the village are included(?).

Immediate Demands

Workers:

(a) A minimum rate of wages, necessary for livelihood shall be fixed by law.

(b) Maximum labour to be performed by an adult male worker be fixed by law to be five and half days in a week. Special conditions be determined by law in the case of woman and child labour.

(c) There should be a law compelling the employers to provide housing for workers, determining their conditions of work (hours, etc.); to render them medical assistance, etc.

(d) There should be legislation to protect the workers in case of sickness, maternity, accident, unemployment and old age.

(e) There should be no prostitutes' houses or liquor shops nearabout the factory areas.

(f) The workers employed in all big factories should have a right to share in the profits made by the same.

(g) Compulsory education of the workers at the expense of the employers.

(h) Setting up (consumers') cooperatives to relieve the economic conditions of the workers.

(i) Recognition by law of the workers' right to form their trade unions, workers' right to strike in order to get their demands fulfilled.

(j) To organise group collections of skilled workers in order to develop them further (?).

Peasants

(a) Fixity of rates in relation to the rents payable by the tenants; the interest charged on arrears of rent should be equal to rate of interest charged by the Imperial Bank.

(b) Cultivator's undivided ownership be recognised on the land he tills.

(c) Permanency of tenure in land (which the cultivator tills), banning of evictions.

(d) Stopping of all unjust and illegal cesses.

(e) Right freely to transfer the land to another without payment of salami.

(f) Right to cut the trees, to dig wells and cut canals and build a house in his land without paying any salami.

(g) Fixing conditions for catching fish in the ponds on the land.

(h) The highest rate of interest to be charged by the mahajan should be fixed at a rate not more than 12 per cent.

(i) Establishing cooperative agricultural banks to give credit to the peasant and thus to release him from the grip of the greedy and professional moneylender.

(j) Machinery needed for cultivation etc. to be sold outright to the peasant or to be given to him on rent for use, and the price of the same or the rent amount thereof to be recovered from the peasant in easy instalments.

(k) To make arrangement for the wholesale sale of jute or other commercial crops so that a just profit rate is guaranteed to the peasant.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (*For one year*)

President: Dr Nareshchandra Sengupta, MADL, Calcutta

Vice-Presidents: Maulavi Qutbuddin Ahmad, Calcutta, Rajibuddin Tarafdar, MLC (Barra), Shri Atulchandra Gupta, Calcutta.

Secretary: Shri Hemantakumar Sarkar, MA, MLC (Nadia).

Assistant Secretary: Maulavi Shamsuddin Hussain (Birbhum).

Members: Soumyendranath Thakur (Calcutta), Qazi Nazrul Islam (Burdwan), Muzaffar Ahmad (Noakhali), Faizuddin Hussain (Mymensingh), Shamsuddin Ahmad (Nadia), Aftab Hussain Jordar (Nadia), Afsaruddin Ahmad (Nadia), Azizur Rahaman (Jamalpur), Shah Abdul Hamid (Kishoreganj), Mohiuddin Ahmad (Tangail), Maqbul Hussain (Naogaon), Saiyad Jahidul Huq Chaudhury (Tripura), Muhammad Fazlul Karim Mallik (Dacca), Brajanath Das (Bogra), Ramanimohan Biswas (Barisal), Manibhusan Mukhopadhyaya (24-Parganas).

13. HOW TO ORGANISE A WORKINGCLASS PARTY

LETTER TO CENTRAL COMMITTEE COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA

According to the letter of Comrade Bagerhatta, the party conference will meet in the middle of November. It has been suggested in a previous letter (personally addressed to Comrade B) that the conference be postponed in order that sufficient preparatory work could be done. But it might be too late. You might have gone too far ahead. It might be inconvenient to postpone the conference now. This being the case, it becomes impossible for us to render as much aid as we should and would. Anyhow we will do our best.

Some suggestions as regards the agenda of the conference have already been made in the letter of Comrade B. Our point of view on all those questions, namely, organisa-

tion of a left opposition inside the National Congress, building up of our party, party press, trade-union work, international affiliation etc. will be submitted to the conference in the form of a joint memorandum. We are of the opinion that the party should issue a manifesto on the occasion of the conference. Herewith enclosed is a draft of the manifesto that we propose should be published. We believe it will reach you in time to be printed and circulated before the party conference.

You will notice that the term communist party has been purposely kept out of the document. This has been done because of our opinion (supported by leading international comrades) that it would be wiser not to call our party a communist party. Apart from tactical reasons, there are political reasons for this. There are honest people sharing our views, in general, who do not dare join the communist party. We may call these people cowards; but the fact is we have still got to build the party. And this cannot be done unless we are able to gather around us all the available materials from which the party can grow. The most important reason, however, is that to be able to accomplish the gigantic task, the communist party have a broad basis. We must have a mass party which can operate legally. A small conspirative group will be of no use. But the name of the party should be changed, provided you agree to it, not mechanically. It must be through an organisational process. Groups and individuals that may enter a revolutionary workingclass party (communist except in name) must be approached; preliminary conversations should be carried on as regards program and organisation; then a conference should be called jointly to launch a broad workingclass party, say the workers' and peasants' party. But let us repeat there is no hurry. It might be just as good, perhaps, to consolidate our own forces before starting out to draw in others. One thing, however, should be made clear. This proposition is not the same as that for the formation of a people's party. They are two entirely different things. One is a veiled

communist party while the other is a revolutionary-nationalist party. In our memorandum to the conference we will revert to the subject.

We hope the 50 pounds sent a month ago to Comrade B's private address have been received. We are awaiting the acknowledgement to remit further instalments. But it will be very necessary that you indicate some better method of transmitting money.

13 October 1926
Berlin

With fraternal greetings,
FOREIGN BUREAU

N.B.—The manifesto should be, of course, issued in the name of the CP since the CP still formally exists.

HOW TO ORGANISE A WORKINGCLASS PARTY

When, in 1920, the first voice was raised to declare the necessity of organising in India a political party of the working class, it almost sounded like a voice in the wilderness. Generally the idea was considered to be fantastic—unrealisable dream of some exiles looking at India through glasses stained with the knowledge of European countries. The bhadralok politicians could not conceive of the common people having any say or significance in the movement to shape the destinies of the country. Curiously enough, this indifference to the importance of the masses and failure to admit that they could possibly have any political significance prevailed even among the revolutionary-nationalists when the country was in the throes of a revolution caused by the fact that for the first time the masses participated actively in the nationalist movement. The British rulers, however, know India and the relative potentiality of the social forces that underlie the nationalist movement much better than the nationalists themselves. While the latter indulge in dreams about an India that never existed and will never exist, the imperialists are guided by a thorough knowledge of realities.

Without this superior knowledge it would have been impossible for them to hold their position against such apparently overwhelming odds. The postwar discontent caused the imperialists many a sleepless night. They were mortally afraid of that revolutionary ferment of popular energy. It might have resulted into something very ugly. As a matter of fact, it dangerously tended to that direction. What was lacking, fortunately for the imperialists, was a bold, consciously revolutionary leadership. And it was but a question of time. Such a gigantic fermentation of mass energy was sure to throw up a conscious vanguard—the revolutionary party of the working class. The ripening of objective conditions was bound to create the corresponding subjective reflex. Indian working class had become the backbone of a great political movement. It must develop its own political organ. Imperialism was quite alive to these possibilities of the situation. Therefore it was not indifferent to the voice which called for the organisation of a workingclass party. The imperialists knew that voice was not foreign to India; on the contrary, it was organically connected to, the subjective reflex of, the conditions in India. A workingclass party would determinedly fight the compromising politics of the bourgeois-nationalists. It would boldly mobilise the fermented popular energy and direct it for the conquest of concrete objects, the first of them being national freedom and democratisation of the country. Consequently all the forces of imperialism were put into action in order to prevent the growth of a workingclass party. Everything was done to choke and cripple the vanguard of the Indian proletariat. The nationalist movement as a whole remained indifferent to that struggle between two apparently unequal forces—the pioneer of the Indian proletariat and agencies of imperialist repression. Worse than that in critical moments leading sections of the nationalist movement joined in the imperialist cry against “bolshevist menace” as the call for the organisation of the workingclass party was depicted to be. Still steeped in

class préjudice, the middle classes looked askance at the activities of the proletarian vanguard, although they themselves were proletarianised as the result of imperialist exploitation. The masses themselves, misled and betrayed by the reactionary nationalist leaders (like Gandhi) whom they had so wholeheartedly trusted, were not yet conscious enough to recognise in the call the voice of their own class. Victims of age-long exploitation, they were still too ignorant, too backward to be conscious of their class interests.

The small proletarian vanguard, however, survived all vicissitudes. Imperialist oppression could not kill it. Nationalist indifference did not make it any less an important factor in the political life of the country. The pioneers have blazed the trail. The question is no longer whether India needs an independent workingclass party or not: whether her "special genius" permits such an outlandish innovation. It is much more practical. How to organise a workingclass party? This is the question.

The obstruction to the organisation of a workingclass party comes from many directions. The frontal attack of the enemy—fierce repression of the vanguard—is now supplemented by clever stratagems of flank attack. Now it is no longer possible to prevent the rise of a workingclass party, the strategy of imperialism and its native allies is to mislead the working class—to divert its growing class-consciousness into harmless reformist channels. Instead of being opposed as before, the idea of forming a class party receives patronage from unexpected quarters, and in many instances the sinister hand of imperialism is perceptible behind the scene. Under these conditions goes on the process of political crystallisation of the proletarian forces.

Politically awake middleclass intellectuals, who are opposed to compromise with imperialism and advocate a militant continuation of the nationalist struggle, talk of organising the masses. But very few of them seem to know how to go about the work they propose to undertake.

They still labour under class prejudice. When they do talk of the masses, they assume a charitable attitude. They do not identify themselves with the class they would lead to salvation. As a matter of fact, they do not recognise class interests and class antagonism. They want to uplift the downtrodden, but not to lead the expropriated and exploited in the revolt against class domination. They have no faith in the masses. They do not admit that the working class is the backbone of society—that the future of human society lies in the hollow of the rough hand of the “ignorant” toiler. Betrayed by the bourgeois-nationalist leaders, these intellectuals have only been forced to see that the movement for national freedom will never succeed without active participation of the masses. Hence their wish to capture the masses, in other words, to use the masses as so many pawns in the struggle.

This is not the way to workingclass party. People, who do not stand on the ground of class-struggle, cannot constitute the vanguard of the proletariat. Those who propose to “harmonise the interests of the masses and the classes” would organise the working class only to betray them. The slogan of a real workingclass party must be: Not the masses for the revolution, but revolution for the masses.

Then there are others who do not even want to capture the masses in order to force a political change that will put them in power. They propose to capture the masses for counterrevolution. These saviours of the working class are actuated with the motive to prevent the growth of a real revolutionary proletarian party—at least to see that the evil day is put off as far as possible. There are too many of these “champions of labour”—on the field.

Even as we write there comes the news that the repeatedly abortive attempt to form a “labour party” has once more been revived, this time under the leadership of Bepin Pal! Those acquainted with the antecedents and ideas of Bepin Pal cannot have any illusion about this “labour party”. Making the allowance for his notorious errati-

cism, Bepin Pal is amazingly class-conscious. On this one question at least he has always been very constant. Under his editorship the *Bengalee* became the most clear-sighted organ of the Indian bourgeoisie. Only two years ago, in the columns of that capitalist organ Bepin Pal expounded his theory that "poverty was a mental state" and popularised the slogan "Work for love; wages are but by-product". Only the other day Pal startled the country by declaring that if he were the viceroy he would also sternly suppress all efforts to disturb the regime of law and order. Bepin Pal, like Lajpat Rai, another champion of "labour party", is a pillar of the reactionary hindu nationalism. In nationalist politics both advocate "responsive cooperation", which means compromise with imperialism in the interests of steady and orderly development of native capitalism. Agreement between the imperialist and native bourgeoisie can be only at the expense of the masses who will all the more be bled so that the greed of both the rivals is satisfied. The role of a labour party formed under such auspices is evident. It is to betray the working class, if they would follow such questionable champions.

Of course, there is no reason to believe that this attempt would be any more successful than the previous one. Very likely nothing more will be heard of the "labour party" in a few months, if not in a few weeks. These attempts fail invariably because of the atmosphere of unreality in which they are made. A few ambitious intellectuals together with one or two politicians with their particular axe to grind take it in their head to form a "labour party". Usually these gentlemen possess little understanding of the problems confronting the working class. The working class is left alone, the membership of the party being limited to a string of office-bearers. Having declared the birth of a "labour party", the office-bearers go home evidently expecting the working class to seek their champions there. Never any propaganda or agitation is made in behalf of the party. No effort is ever made to recruit members from the working class. This being the case, one could ignore these

attempts to form pseudo-labour parties as harmless, if they did not show how the working class should not be organised.

Therefore let us examine briefly the latest instance. The program of the newly-formed "labour party" is illuminating. It shows very clearly the dangerous tendency these unexpected champions of labour represent. The proletarian vanguard engaged in the difficult task of building a revolutionary workingclass party must beware of these unexpected flank attacks. The backwardness of the labour movement, youthfulness of the proletariat as a class and ideological immaturity of the leaders are likely to contribute to the success of these efforts to corrupt the young party with opportunism. We have seen well-meaning but inexperienced and theoretically unsound leaders of the labour movement connected with every one of these treacherous attempts. These mistakes should be avoided.

The objects of Bepin Pal's "labour party" are (1) to propagate the ideals of trade-unionism; (2) to secure the workers freedom with regard to their natural rights; (3) to educate public opinion in favour of these rights; (4) to promote and protect the interests of workers in British India by all legal means.

Judging from this program, it is not a political party which will be formed. There is no mention of any organised political activity of the working class. Obviously this curious body would have the working class to leave politics alone just when the working class is called upon by history to play a dominating political role in the movement for national freedom. To be able to discharge this role and to prepare for still greater ones the working class must have its own independent political party. So here is an attempt to organise a labour party which begins by ruling out of its program the very *raison d'être* of a workingclass party.

Then the party would secure freedom for the workers with regard to their natural rights, and by all legitimate means. All depends upon what is considered to be the "natural rights" of the workers. The program fails to en-

lighten us on this very vital point. But we have Mr Pal's well-known philosophy to go by ("Poverty is a relative term—a mental state", "Work for love..."). Guided by this eminently capitalist philosophy, the party would secure freedom for the workers to serve the community (that is the employing classes) out of love. Further, if freedom for the exploited class and oppressed peoples is to be secured by "all legal means", it will never be secured. The object of the law is to maintain a given system of social relationship and political institutions under which it is promulgated. Any attempt to change the given system, therefore, is a challenge to the law, is illegal from the point of view of the dominating class or power. Freedom for the exploited class cannot be secured without disturbing the system based upon the right of exploitation; nor can a subject people be free without breaking the power of the foreign conqueror. Therefore the movement for the freedom of the exploited class is a challenge to the capitalist law and the movement for the national independence of an oppressed people is bound to violate imperialist legality. The principle and program of the political party of the Indian working class must inevitably entail the commission of two sets of illegal acts—violation of imperialist laws, for the party must stand for national independence, and violation of capitalist law, for a working class must stand on the ground of relentless class struggle until class-ridden society is replaced by socialist commonwealth. Within the framework of the capitalist and imperialist law now in force the only freedom that the Indian working class can have is the freedom to serve the British imperialists and the native upper-classes (capitalists, landlords and feudal princes) as cheaply as possible.

Another point in the program deserves some attention. It is stipulated that the party will "protect and promote the interests of the workers in British India". The native states, one-third of the country in population and area, are not to be touched. Obviously the organisers of the "labour party" are of the opinion that the interests of the

workers are well protected and liberally promoted by the feudal potentates. What about the brutal suppression of the peasant movement in a number of states? Perhaps for tactical reasons the party does not wish to undertake the fight against feudal autocracy in the native states while engaged in the struggle against foreign imperialism. But there is no ground for this supposition since the party does not propose any struggle whatsoever against British domination. It even does not propose to lead the proletariat, the initial state of class struggle—the fight for higher wages, shorter hours, better working conditions, freedom of association, right to strike etc. As a matter of fact, it is a labour party in name only. It has no class character. It would not organise the working class even for the conquest and defence of the most elementary economic and civic rights. It would persuade the public (in which is included the employing class) by educative efforts to recognise the natural rights of workers.

The object of forming such "labour parties" under highly questionable patronage of bourgeois politicians is evident. It is to "take the working class in hand" as C.R. Das advised already at the Gaya congress. The bourgeois politicians are prompted to patronise these safe and sane, ineffective, often nonexistent, superclass, legal "labour parties" as set off against the rise of a revolutionary workingclass party. Under the leadership of this party the working class will soon play an independent role in the nationalist movement and is sure to spoil the plans of the native bourgeoisie to betray the people for the interests of their class.

While counterrevolutionary bourgeois politicians and agents of imperialism, in so many deceptive garbs, are seeking to divert the growing class-consciousness of the young Indian proletariat into wrong channels, the revolutionary vanguard of the working class must know how to accomplish its task—how to organise the workingclass party. One essential thing to be kept always in mind is that the party is the vanguard of the class and that the

strength of the vanguard lies in its close and constant contact with the army it leads. The vanguard should be careful not to go too fast and too far ahead of the entire working class. The party as the political organ of the class must grow out of the class. It should not be formed, as the so-called labour parties are sought to be formed, far away from the working class, to be imposed upon it, or even to ignore it. Ideological pioneers of the working-class party may come from the declassed intellectuals (it is bound to be so particularly in India where the middle-class intellectuals are proletarianised and the proletariat culturally backward) but the bulk of the membership should be recruited from the proletariat.

There is no party without a program. The program of the party reflects the demands of the class it represents. The program of a workingclass party, therefore, is the program of socialism. Objectively the working class throughout the world stands for the abolition of capitalist system and the establishment of socialist society. The wage-slave is destined by history to revolt against and abolish the system of wage-slavery. But the road to socialism passes through successive stages of social development.

The working class in countries which have had these stages of social development is engaged in the final state of class-struggle—struggle for the realisation of socialism. The situation of India is different. India today is engaged in the revolutionary struggle for democratic freedom. This will be realised through the overthrow of foreign domination and liquidation of the medieval socioeconomic institutions. The working class must actively participate and lead this struggle for democratic freedom. The working-class party, therefore, must fight under two programs: minimum program to be realised in the immediate future and maximum program the realisation of which will depend upon the carrying out of the minimum program. The minimum program will contain immediate demands of the working class and will be broad enough to rally

around the working class all the other social elements whose interests demand national independence and complete democratisation of the country, Democratic republic, universal suffrage, protection for minorities, educational facilities, agrarian revolution, removal of obstructions to the forces of production, fulfilment of the immediate demands of the proletariat (wages, hours, conditions of labour etc.) these will be main features of the minimum program. Although the realisation of the maximum program is a comparatively remote issue in the present conditions of India, its formulation is essential for the growth and guidance of the working class party. The maximum program of the working class party is the program of victorious class-struggle, of social revolution, of socialism. The minimum program should be fitted into the framework of the maximum program. It is but means to the end. The working class must participate in and lead if necessary (as it is in India) the fight for the conquest of democratic freedom as an advance towards the realisation of socialism. Unless the maximum program of social revolution is constantly and clearly kept before the party, there is the danger of opportunist deviation.

Under normal conditions of social evolution the rising bourgeoisie in possession of higher means production fights for democratic freedom which release the forces of production from feudal fetters. A series of foreign invasions disturbed the normal course of social development in India. Bourgeois revolution, in so far as it deprives feudalism of political power and establishes a centralised capitalist state, took place in India in the shape of British conquest. After more than a century of forced stagnation native capitalism grew, potentially antagonistic to imperialist monopoly. The native bourgeoisie, which aspire for political power are, however, not ready to fight for it. The British domination cannot be overthrown without a revolutionary fight. This depends upon the mobilisation of the mass energy. The native bourgeoisie are afraid of a revolution. They rather share power with imperialist

overlords and grow economically under their protection. Thus the struggle for national freedom under bourgeois leadership and with a capitalist program has ended in compromise. The nationalist bourgeoisie would be satisfied with selfgovernment within the empire. This means the bourgeoisie have abandoned the fight for the complete democratisation of the country. The task of carrying through the bourgeois revolution, which began with the British conquest, therefore, devolves upon the working class and other exploited sections of the society. The working class must carry on a determined fight against compromise with imperialism, because this compromise will intensify capitalist exploitation of India, greed of native capitalism will be satisfied not by diminishing imperialist plunder, but by intensifying the exploitation of Indian working class.

Even if the bourgeoisie had not abandoned the fight for democratic freedom, the working class should have still participated in it as an advance towards the fight for socialism. Under given conditions the hegemony of the struggle devolves upon the proletariat. Consequently the minimum program of the workingclass party comes very close to the maximum. So much so that the fight for the realisation of one directly leads up to the fight for the other. This situation must tell upon the organisation and activities of the party.

On the sound basis of this revolutionary program the party will be built by untiring, detailed, everyday work of the vanguard. It is clear that economic freedom for the working class cannot be secured except through the capture of political power. This is one of the cardinal principles of workingclass politics. Any improvement of the conditions of the Indian working class depends upon the cessation of imperialist robbery and the liquidation of antiquated social relations that still cramp the economic life of the country. In other words, the future of the working class is inseparably bound up with the political struggle for democratic national freedom. Social

emancipation of the working class is a still remoter issue—conditional upon the fierce struggle for state-power. But the great majority of the Indian working class are still politically too backward to see so far ahead and fight for such a distant goal. They are overwhelmed by the immediate surroundings. The workingclass party will develop in the midst of the struggle against the immediate surroundings of the average working man. In course of this everyday fight the party will show, by practical experience, how the immediate issue of wages, hours, labour conditions, etc. are connected with the larger and apparently remoter political issues.

Agitation and propaganda among the proletarian masses are vitally necessary for the building up of the workingclass party. The program of the party must be popularised. The class-consciousness of the masses must be awakened. This will be done through the party press, public meetings, workmen's clubs, proclamations, leaflets etc. The vanguard must be in the midst of the unconscious and partially conscious masses agitating, organising, educating, leading. In a country like ours where the masses are so lamentably backward, the danger is great for the vanguard to be isolated from the class. Nothing could be more disastrous for the party. Every member of the party must be attached to a group of workers with the task of winning them for the party.

Trade unions, peasant organisations and cooperative societies are the field of operation of the workingclass party. Side by side with its activities in these organisations the party must also reach the working class in the places of work, factories etc. The major portion of the Indian proletariat is still unorganised. It is for the party to organise them into trade unions. Propaganda in favour of revolutionary labour organisation of class struggle must be carried on. Party members must penetrate the existing trade unions and peasant organisations in order to transform them into fighting workingclass organs. Agita-

tion should be made in favour of socialist and proletarian leadership of the unions and other workingclass bodies.

Press is an essential instrument to build up the party. Through its organs the party keeps constant contact with the working class by giving expression to the grievances and demands of the latter. Through its theoretical organs the party educates its own members as regards the program and tasks of the party and wins new adherents. There cannot be any party without a party press. To extend the circulation of the party organs and other publications is the duty of each party member.

Lastly, ideological clarity on the party of the vanguard is indispensable for the organisation of a real working-class party. Otherwise we may repeat the story of the blind leading the blind. Only a clear-sighted revolutionary vanguard with faith in the masses, fully conversant with the role the proletariat is destined to play, closely connected with the entire working class will organise the workingclass party in India. In short, there cannot be real workingclass party without a Marxian leadership.

14. PROGRAM OF A WORKINGCLASS PARTY

In the article—"How to Organise a Workingclass Party"—published in our last issue, it was warned "unless the maximum program of social revolution is constantly and clearly kept before the party, there is the danger of opportunist deviation". An analytical study of the program of the Bengal Workers' and Peasants' Party, as formulated by the president of the party, Naresh Sengupta in the second number of the *Ganavani*, shows how timely and warranted is the warning.

In his program article, Comrade Sengupta visualises

social revolution as the object of the party. While answering what the Workers' and Peasants' Party means by freedom, he says:

"For us the country is not the handful of rich upper class. The interest of the millions of poor labourers is the real interest of the country. To imagine the country free while these millions of labourers are still deprived of freedom is madness."

Complete freedom—economic, political and social—for the labouring masses is conditional upon the abolition of classes. From the general drift of Comrade Sengupta's article one can gather that he does not consider the formal political liberty in capitalist democracy as real freedom. What makes political liberty in capitalist democracy a mere formality as far as the labouring masses are concerned? Economic domination of the propertied classes who own and control the means of production. Political liberties under capitalist democracy are only a formality because they do not eliminate the right of exploitation of man by man. Under capitalist democracy society is split up into two classes—exploiting and the exploited. Although a minority, the former, by virtue of its ownership of the means of production, controls the economic life of society. The majority is expropriated and exploited even under the guise of political liberties of capitalist democracy. Consequently, the object visualised by Comrade Sengupta cannot be realised—the millions of labouring masses cannot be really free until private property is abolished, means of production are socialised, wage-slavery is eliminated and class domination is terminated. In short, perhaps unwittingly, Comrade Sengupta commits the party to the program of social revolution.

But how does he propose to realise this very correct program of the Workers' and Peasants' Party? There is much confusion in the formulation of the program; but the confusion becomes worse confounded when Comrade Sengupta develops this program in practical details. If the party accepts the theories of Comrade Sengupta and

follows the line indicated by him, it will sink in the quagmire of opportunism. The party must have an ideologically clear leadership in order to avoid this calamity.

The first opportunist deviation of Comrade Sengupta is the attempt to beg the question of relation with the British empire. He says that:

"It is waste of time to argue whether it is absolutely necessary to break away from the British empire in order to realise our ideal of freedom."

Comrade Sengupta sets before us an ideal of freedom which must be attained through a social revolution. But he declares it to be unessential to discuss under what conditions that freedom will be attainable. Liberation from foreign domination is the primary condition for the complete political, economic and social freedom of the Indian people. In the opinion of Comrade Sengupta the fulfilment of this primary condition is not essential. Immediately after committing the party to the program of social revolution, he states:

"It is not impossible for India to attain fully real freedom while remaining inside the British empire."

He even goes so far as to assert that it will be "advantageous for us to maintain friendly relations with England". Here the question arises in whose behalf is he speaking? As the president of the Workers' and Peasants' Party he must be the spokesman of the labouring masses. The relation between the labouring masses of India and British imperialism is that of exploitation. India's remaining inside the British empire, no matter on what condition, means the preservation of that relation.

The British empire is reared largely on the basis of the exploitation of the Indian masses. It is indeed beyond comprehension how the relations with this empire can be "advantageous for us" (workers and peasants of India). Comrade Sengupta talks of "friendly relations with England". Perhaps he has the British working class in mind. But the British empire should not be confounded with the British working class. Friendly relations with the British

working class is certainly advantageous for the Indian people in the struggle for freedom. But this friendship does not tend to keep India within the empire. On the contrary, it spells disruption of the empire, Indian people must have the friendship and cooperation of the British working class to liberate themselves from imperialist exploitation—to break away from imperialist domination and enter into a free national existence.

On the question of imperial relations, Comrade Sengupta further states:

"If the day comes when it will be really necessary to decide this question, then it will have to be done according to the verdict of the people, in consultation with England and taking into account the advantages and disadvantages of our relations with England."

Breaking up of all imperial connection—national independence—is the burning question of the day. This question will not have to be solved some day. It must be solved at this moment. And there is nothing to decide. The situation is obvious. Indian workers and peasants are exploited by British capital. In order to be free from this exploitation they must deprive British capital of the political power over India. On this the verdict of the people is not to be awaited. The verdict is given. The role of the party that represents the labouring masses is to voice the verdict. The party is the conscious vanguard of the working class. It must give concrete expression to the objective demands of the working class. The interests of the workers and peasants of India are antagonistic to imperialism. Freedom, progress and prosperity of the Indian masses are conditional upon the elimination of the agency of exploitation that keeps them politically enslaved, culturally backward and materially pauperised. This being the case, the objective demand of the people is that this agency of exploitation must be eliminated as soon as possible.

Comrade Sengupta would have India break up imperial relations by consultation with England. In other words,

one must consult with the burglar as to whether the latter is prepared to leave the house he has broken into! The question of "advantages and disadvantages of our relation with England" has been dealt with above. In short, Indian landowning and capitalist classes may find it advantageous to maintain imperial connection as a safeguard against the possible revolt of the exploited masses; but for the workers and peasants the imperial connection is entirely disadvantageous. It should be broken as soon as possible.

On the very vital question of national independence Comrade Sengupta has committed a series of grave mistakes. This is due to the defective understanding of class struggle and of imperialism.

A mistaken and opportunist attitude on this basic question leads to erroneous theories as regards the methods by which Indian masses will win freedom. He rules out armed revolt as impossible for India. He does so owing to a lamentable lack of faith in the power of the masses. He admits that "there is no power that can resist the organised force of the popular masses". But he insinuated that the Indian workers and peasants are not capable of developing such an organised force. He compares the elemental revolt of the disarmed, impoverished and badly organised Indian masses to impotent fury of the weak aspiring to lay the giant low. This is counsel of pessimism. This is defeatism. Indian labouring masses expect something else from their party.

Comrade Sengupta very correctly agrees that the non-cooperation movement collapsed because it was not supported by organised mass energy. The noncooperation movement was a mass movement. It was indeed the first great mass movement that did not fail owing to the weakness of the masses; it failed because the leaders refused to develop the fermented mass energy. They refused because further development of the mass energy in organised form would inevitably lead to national insurrection.

As against all other methods (constitutional agitation,

noncooperation, insurrection) Comrade Sengupta puts forward organised action of the masses as the most effective. Quite correct. But why shirk the issue and thereby set up opportunist illusions? The ultimate form which organised mass action is bound to take is insurrection. What is the use of mobilising the revolutionary energy of the masses (as Comrade Sengupta proposes to do) unless it is to be used effectively. The slogan of "nonpayment of taxes" rallied the peasant masses under the banner of the noncooperation movement. The next step was to lead the peasantry against the landlords and the forces of imperialism that stood behind them. That is to lead the peasant to an insurrectionary uprising. The masses are to be organised, the mass energy is to be developed and mobilised for a fight with the forces that exploit the masses. These forces would not fade away as soon as the masses are organised. On the contrary, in proportion as the masses are organised, mass energy is mobilised in the fight for freedom, the dominating and exploiting forces become more aggressive—their methods become offensive. The masses must either break down this offensive or succumb before it.

Perhaps Comrade Sengupta has the syndicalist "folded arm" theory in his mind. But this theory has exploded in practice. The working class may fold their hands, but the bourgeoisie make full use of their hands as well as of all the instruments of oppression—press, pulpit, espionage, police, army, etc.—in their hands. The working masses must organise themselves not for the sake of organisation, but to fight against and overthrow the present system of class domination.

Comrade Sengupta's theories as regards imperial relation and the method in the struggle for freedom are closely connected. They mutually produce each other. If you are against the method of organising the masses for a revolutionary fight, you must spin out theories of "real freedom" inside the empire. On the other hand, if you are of the opinion that "real freedom" is attainable inside

the empire, why should you travel the dangerous road of insurrection? But these theories are not the theories of workingclass politics. They should be quickly discarded by the Workers' and Peasants' Party.

We are obliged to point out still one more mistake in the program outlined by Comrade Sengupta. This is also a grave mistake and opens up the high road to opportunism.

After stating the supreme necessity of organising the labouring masses, Comrade Sengupta proceeds to lay down what should be done for this purpose. In his opinion, in order to organise the working classes we must see that measures are taken to improve their economic conditions. This is simply putting the cart before the horse. The working class is organised not after economic, sanitary and educational conditions are improved. They organise themselves in the midst of the fight for such improvements—in the fight for the eight-hour day, minimum wage, tolerable labour conditions, political rights, educational facilities, etc. In course of the fight for immediate demands, the working classes acquire political education. They learn that immediate economic conditions are fundamentally linked up with the entire social system, that the working class cannot be really free unless the entire social system is changed. They also learn in experience that the necessary transformation of society cannot be effected except by overthrowing the political domination of the possessing class and by the capture of the state power.

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VI. The Agricultural Commission of India

15. AGRICULTURAL POLICY OF BRITISH IMPERIALISM IN INDIA

G. A. K. LUHANI

Recently, Lord Reading, the outgoing viceroy of India, announced the appointment of a commission to study the agricultural condition of the country. This comes after a series of official statements, both in India and England, that agriculture is the greatest problem confronting India today. The nomination of the next viceroy, who is to succeed Lord Reading, has also been meant as a sign that agriculture is to occupy official attention during the next few years to a considerably greater extent than before: Lord Irwin, the viceroy-designate, having been a minister of agriculture in a conservative cabinet.

It is significant that this discovery of the importance of agriculture has been made now. Many of the swarajist critics of the British government's new agricultural policy have, however, missed the significance. They have run away with the hasty assumption that it is meant to divert the "attention of the public from the political problems (namely agitation for autonomy etc.) which alone are important".

Now, the new agricultural policy of the British government is not designed to take attention away from the "political problems". That may or may not be one of its effects in the sense of the swarajist interpretation. On the other hand it is clear that it is designed as a further over-

hauling and modernisation of the mechanism of oppression.

The economic exploitation of the Indian population is done according to a certain system. The system changes with developing circumstances; simple robbery by force giving place to robbery by subtle methods of fraud on national scale in the history of colonial expropriations. Till the beginning of the last imperialist war, India was used by the British capitalists as a vast reservoir of raw materials, and in the second place as a dumping ground for the industrial products of England. There was undoubtedly here and there a considerable amount of British capital "working" on the spot in India, invested in the nascent industries. There was also developing an active participation of native capital in these industries.

But the economic characteristics of prewar India remained, in spite of the commencing processes of industrialism, those of an industrially backward country. The proletariat consisted, for the most part, of the vast masses of the miserably paid agricultural workers and the coolies on the plantations, with a fringe of industrial workers, properly so-called, in the large cities like Bombay, Kanpur, Calcutta and Madras. The function of these labouring masses was to produce raw materials and to prepare them for export to England and in the second place to absorb, according to their buying capacity, the industrial imports from England. The surplus-value from this process had been shared between the foreign and the native bourgeoisie, the lion's share of course going to the former.

Already during the war, a start was made with a more extensive development of industries, for the immediate purpose of supplying the war needs of British imperialism in the Near and the Middle East. Since then the industrialisation of India has become the accepted policy of British imperialism, as laid down by the industrial commission 1916-1917. There is now a constant flow of capital from London to various industrial areas in India where, in collaboration with capital supplied by the native bourgeoisie, the foundations have been laid for what is practically an industrial revolution after the model of that

which happened in Europe generally in the 19th century in the period of transition from the economy of guild and craft industries to the higher economy of high scale industrialism.

As is well known, the industrialisation of a country must have in the beginning, as its basis, a "protected" home-market. This is the necessary condition of its growth. It means that the competition of foreign countries for the supply of goods to India must be regulated, controlled and, if necessary, made to cease. This is precisely what is being done in India now by a system of protective tariffs, "discriminate protection" and bounties. The large firm of steel manufacturers in India, namely, Tata and Co, has received large bounties. Many other industries are "protected".

But the absence of foreign competition is only one of the factors in the creation of a home-market. Another and a more important factor is the buying capacity of the population concerned; because protected industries means higher prices. The second phase of the industrial policy of the British government is precisely to take measures to increase the buying capacity of the Indian peasants, who as the overwhelming majority of the population, are responsible for the greatest consumption of goods.

The appointment of the agricultural commission is a step towards estimating the actual economic position of the Indian peasantry with a view to increase its power of absorbing the products of the new industrialism. In the imperialist press, the commission has been presented as a philanthropic gesture for the unique benefit of the peasants; it is of course nothing of the sort. It does not propose to consider the question of the relation of the peasants to the landlords, the question of ownership of land, the pivotal question in any scheme of peasant improvement. The labours of the commission will leave the Indian peasants, in the future as in the past, completely at the mercy of the landlords, the hierarchy of rent-collecting intermediaries, and the sahuakar (moneylender) to whom the indebtedness of the peasant has assumed colossal proportions.

Nor will there be any attempt to abolish the system of minute fragmentation of holdings which obtains in many parts of India. No measures are to be taken to improve the position of the smallholders. As a matter of fact, legislation is being proposed in some provinces to buy out the large number of smallholders with the double purpose of facilitating large capitalist farming and pauperising vast masses of the peasants for their eventual employment as necessary manpower in the new intensive industrialism.

The question of land-tenure is expressly left out of the agenda of the commission. It is quite evident that the commission has been called into being with the eminently capitalist object of making the Indian peasant work harder, so that the yield of his labour may be greater and his exploitation, in the interests of the British capital invested in India, more intensive.

International Press Correspondence

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16. PUNJAB MONEYLENDERS BILL

The systematic hindu opposition to the moneylenders' bill in the Punjab legislative council, reveals the economic antagonism which plays a great role in the communal dissensions in India. Let it not be forgotten that the Punjab is the centre of the hindu-muslim conflicts that radiate from there to all other parts of India. The fact that nearly all the moneylenders in the province happen to be hindus and debtors mostly muslims has made the moneylenders' bill a focus of the communal antagonism. In itself, the bill is but a moderate measure proposed to control the malpractices and fraudulent dealings of the usurers. No Indian, whether hindu or muslim, who has in the least the welfare of the masses at heart, can hesitate to support the measure, much less to organise a violent opposition to it.

Let us examine the facts regarding the moneylenders and the indebtedness of the Punjab peasantry in some detail. The struggle between the toiling peasant and his ruthless exploiter, the moneylender, is very old. The cultivator's effort to keep body and soul together, living as he does on the margin of subsistence does not always succeed. It is calculated that during a cycle of five years, in one year he gets good crops, in another bad and during the rest indifferent, neither good nor bad. This in normal circumstances; the havoc worked by casual famines is not taken into account. Under these conditions the peasant has often to borrow money to keep up his family. In going to borrow he walks straight into the widespread net of the moneylenders from which it is almost impossible to extricate oneself. In nearly every village or small town, there is a local trader who is a professional moneylender. He always prays god to cause drought in the country so that he may easily catch the poor peasant into his wily net. In forty cases out of a hundred the peasant has to mortgage his piece of land for the loan.

During the closing two decades of the last century a considerable portion of land was transferred to the moneylenders. Taking advantage of the precarious economic conditions of the cultivator, the moneylender was able to impose such hard terms in the mortgage transaction that it always ended in sale. During the period of 1875-1893, 1,179,000 acres of cultivated land in different parts of the province passed into the hands of the usurers. The usurer-parasite was thus eating into the vitals of the peasantry, threatening in a short period their complete ruin. Destitution and discontent began to grow. The British government which never loses an opportunity to pose as the friend and protector of the Indian masses intervened and passed in 1901 the Punjab land alienation act, by virtue of which the professional moneylender could not dispossess an agriculturist who had cultivated his land for more than twenty years. Some more legislations were passed by which the peasant could neither be evicted, nor arrested for debt; his plough, cattle, implements and seeds could not be attached for the redemption of his debt.

These legal measures helped the peasant only to keep alive in order to work for the moneylenders, landlords and the government. His complete ruin was not profitable for his exploiters. But his material condition was not essentially improved. As a matter of fact this cannot be done except through the very radical remedy of doing away with the landlords, moneylenders and other exploiters. The poor ignorant farmer was forced and enticed more and more into the mire of indebtedness. There is a proverb in the province: Once in debt, always in debt. The manipulations of the clever moneylender do not allow the peasant to free himself from his iron grip. In the best years the surplus produce is so small that the interest is paid with difficulty, and from the principal there is no escape. The usual rate of interest is 18½ per cent for cash and 25 per cent for grain. In some areas rates go as high as 50 per cent and over. This is not all. The moneylender charges compound interest at the rate of 50 per cent for cash and 100 per cent for grain. At 60 per cent (a rate by no means uncommon in India) a debt of one rupee will become 100 rupees in eight years (sic). The peasants' resources are limited to the crop which is hardly threshed before the moneylender swoops down and carries away from the threshing-floor all but what is necessary to keep the cultivator and his family alive till the following harvest. The moneylender, by showing so much mercy, does not want to kill the hen which lays the golden eggs for him.

The following figures present a vivid picture of the economic condition of the Punjab peasantry:

(1) Only 17 per cent of landed proprietors are free of debt. These mostly belong to the landlord class living on land rent.

(2) The average debt per indebted proprietor (a peasant holding a piece of land) is Rs 463.

(3) Total debt represents 15½ times the land revenue paid by all concerned whether indebted or not.

(4) Mortgage debt is 40 per cent of the entire debt, in some districts it is 60 per cent.

(5) Average peasant proprietor's debt is equal to three years of his net income.

(6) Total agricultural debt amounts to 90 crore or 19 times the land revenue.

(7) Annual interest charges amount to 13 crore or nearly three times the total land revenue of the province.

The moneylender is not content with charging exorbitant rates of interest. His evil genius takes recourse to various malpractices which cannot be controlled or even detected by the ignorant peasant. These are:

(1) An anna is deducted from every rupee advanced and interest is charged upon the whole amount.

(2) When the balance is struck the debtor may be forced to go before the subregistrar and state that he has received the whole amount in cash, although most of it is accumulated interest.

(3) Debts are misrepresented in the ledger by entering inferior grains as if they were wheat.

(4) No interest is allowed on repayments in kind and not as much as is due on credits in cash.

(5) A full year's interest is charged on a loan though the latter may only have been taken a few months before the balance is struck.

(6) Accounts are kept in such a loose unintelligible way that interest cannot be separated from the principal.

(7) Old grain is doled out for food in the cold weather and repayment is taken a few months later in wheat or cash plus 25 or 50 per cent.

(8) The bulk of a man's grain is taken straight from the threshing-floor so as to compel him a month later to borrow at a high rate of interest for the payment of his land revenue.

The present moneylender's bill, far from attacking the extortions of the usurers, only seeks to check some of the abovementioned evil practices. The proposed legislation would require the moneylenders to register themselves with the government so that their accounts may be checked and controlled at any time. Even if the bill is passed these evils will not be eradicated as the petty officials in charge of controlling the ledgers of the usurers cannot be

expected to be above bribery and will be only too glad to become partners in the spoils of the moneylenders.

In spite of all this very moderate character of the bill a hard fight is being put up against it in the council as well as outside. When a year ago the bill was first introduced in the council it was immediately denounced by the hindu members as a communal measure. This incident points out the economic basis of communal dissensions which baffle the efforts of the nationalist leaders. The moneylenders are practically all hindus, while the overwhelming majority of the indebted peasantry are muslim. A legislative measure checking the flagrant abuses of the hindu usurers is not taken on its merit, but made a butt of communal antagonism.

Lala Lajpat Rai's attitude towards the bill is remarkable. After shedding some crocodile tears for the ruined peasantry of the Punjab (which practice is very common with the exploiting master class) he writes in his organ *The People*: "If the bill is passed in its present form and enforced vigorously the blow aimed at the 40,000 moneylenders of the province will hit a far more numerous class. Restriction of credit on a vast scale that will be bound to result from an enforcement of the provisions of the proposed measure will hit agriculture and industry alike." In his anxiety for the already overflowing pockets of 40,000 individuals, Lala forgets the rest, of 20,000,000 who are going deeper and deeper into the mire of misery and starvation. Of course, he pays a lip service to the wretched condition of the toilers on the land. But what does that amount to in plain language? He warns them that unless they keep quiet in their submission to moneylender sharks, they will be given no credit, which will put them in an embarrassing position. At the same time he is encouraging his Shylock brethern not to accept anything below a pound of flesh. This shameful attitude of Lajpat Rai does not reflect his personal views; it is determined by the interests of an entire class. In view of the coming elections it is very important for the bourgeois politicians to win the good graces of the merchant and usurer who belong to the fortunate 2 per cent electorate. In search

for votes the nationalist parliamentarians would not hesitate to sacrifice the interests of 20,000,000 poor peasants on the altar of the moneylenders' greed. It is not for nothing that the Lala calls the attention of the swarajists to mobilise their forces against the bill. He has recommended that the swarajists must return to the council to vote against the bill. New elections are pending, and the group which has the support of the financiers will have a greater chance to oust their rivals. The mockery of the whole affair is that it has been made a hindu-muslim question. To secure a few seats in the council the nationalist politicians would pour oil on the already devouring flames of communal dissension. But as far as the masses are concerned there is no communal question. The hindu or sikh peasant is as much in the clutches of the banias as the muslims.

The Masses of India

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VII. Congress Walkout and the General Election

17. NATIONALISM AND CLASS STRUGGLE

"The labourers of this country are no longer dormant and there are signs among them of all-pervading selfconsciousness. And in the event of a full awakening there will come a revolution a thousand times more cruel than the Russian revolution. The longer the rulers delay in settling with the intelligentsia of this land the chances of this revolution will draw nearer" (*Forward*, 23 May 1926).

Thus Birendra Nath Sasmal is reported to have declared in his presidential speech to the Bengal provincial congress at Krishnanagar. It is a statement which reveals an attitude of mind which is shared by many nationalists and which will repay some careful examination. It is evidence of the present prevailing lack of any attempt at clearly understanding the class issues involved in the national struggle, and moreover possibly without the intention of the author, it implies a theory of clear relationships and class struggle which is definitely reactionary and pro-imperialist in character.

If the statement quoted, and especially the last sentence, were a solitary phenomenon it could perhaps be regarded as a mere isolated example of eccentricity or lack of clarity of thought, but it derives its importance from the very fact that it reflects accurately a present stage in the understanding of class issues and that it is only one of a host of similar examples that could be culled from the daily press. This stage of understanding is itself a sign and the result of the present stage of the class struggle in India.

It is not so long ago that the bulk of nationalist opinion devoutly believed that class divisions and class strife such as they manifested themselves in western countries were a peculiarity of the latter and that their emergence in India could and should be avoided. This argument formed an important weapon in the attack conducted by Mahatma Gandhi and others against the adoption of western institutions, in spite of the fiction that conflict between capital and labour did not exist or could be avoided in India was rapidly dispelled by events. Not only did the class basis of nationalist movement begin to stand out more clearly, but the masses also began to be drawn into movements of a definitely class character, such as the refusal of rent payment, industrial conflicts and strikes. Labour organisation advanced steadily and it became evident that at any rate as far as industry was concerned India was to escape none of the class complications and conflicts associated with western capitalism.

The idyllic dreams of class harmony have been shattered. It is now impossible not to recognise that the labourers in India are gradually becoming imbued with an "all-pervading selfconsciousness", as Sasmal calls it, by which is meant class-consciousness. The masses represent a new and potent force which has to be reckoned with. Unfortunately our bourgeois-nationalists, unable now to deny the existence of this force, hope still to be able to suppress it. Their attitude is dominated by fear much more than by affection. Concern for the masses is inspired by a desire to suppress any tendency to encroachment on the part of the masses against their property or privileges. This motive has been admitted in the crudest possible terms. Thus C. R. Das, in his historic speech at the Gaya congress in advocating work among the masses, declared as clearly as possible that the object was not to further the economic interests of the workers and peasants but to prevent the development of the class struggle. If the Congress does not take up the work, he said, "you may expect to find organisations set up by labourers and peasants, which will inevitably bring within the arena of the peaceful revolution, class struggles and the war of special interests. To

avoid that disgraceful issue let us take labour and the peasantry in hand."

As one more example of this prevalent attitude let us take a sentence from a leading article in the *Bombay Chronicle* after the Lahore session of the Trade Union Congress in March 1923:

"If labour cuts itself off from the Congress and is exclusively occupied with its own problems, we are afraid such a state of things will endanger class exclusiveness and promote class warfare as in western countries, both of which it should be the endeavour of all well-wishers of the country not to see imported into India."

According to this view, then, class exclusiveness and class warfare do not exist in India and should not be imported into the country. This importation can be prevented by distracting the attention of the workers from their own grievances and problems. This is the generous and noble spirit which impels our nationalist bourgeoisie to concern themselves over the fate of the masses and peasants, just as on a smaller scale it moves the employer to concern himself over the welfare of his employees and to set limits to the extent of their exploitation.

Sasmal's position only differs from this in that he recognises fully the existence of a class division and that he draws a definite conclusion from it. The history of every country in the world has proved to us that capitalism and class warfare are inseparably connected. The class division of capital and labour, of exploiters and exploited, is involved in the very being of the capitalist method of production, and makes its appearance in India with the very first introduction of capitalism. "All hitherto existing history is the history of class struggles" says the opening sentence of Marx's *Communist Manifesto* and the laws governing the development of society in India are no more different from those applying in other parts of the world than is the law of gravitation. The introduction of modern capitalist forms by the British conquest of India superposed on and replacing the ancient feudal and mercantile capitalist structure has given rise to a number of class forces whose development proceeds through the

working out of their mutual antagonisms. Among these class forces we may distinguish especially British imperialist-capitalism, Indian feudal landlordism, Indian capitalism, the Indian petty bourgeoisie, and the Indian proletariat and peasantry. The rise of the Indian capitalist class has coincided with and determined the rise of the Indian nationalist movement. With the development of capitalist forms of exploitation both Indian and imperial, both in industry and agriculture, the class divisions have become more pronounced, and class struggles have become more acute. As Indian capitalist society develops, class issues, which were formerly obscured owing to the backward development of the country, come into prominence and the clash between the interests of exploiting capital and exploited labour takes an ever more important place.

On the one side are ranged the forces of British capitalism and its allies in exploitation, viz Indian feudalism and big capitalism, on the other side are the exploited masses of workers and peasantry. In between are to be found the numerically comparatively insignificant ranks of the petty bourgeoisie (the small traders, merchants, and the professional and educated classes and independent artisans) who are, however, important for the influence which they are able to exercise over the still largely not yet class-conscious workers and peasants. Their ranks are reinforced by sections of the Indian bourgeoisie whose attitude is determined by uncompromising antagonism to British imperialism.

What is the position of the petty bourgeoisie in relation to the rapidly developing class struggle, between the forces of the combined British and Indian bourgeoisie and the Indian proletariat and peasantry? Can they prevent this struggle? Of course not, for this struggle is bound up with the growth itself of capitalism in India in the last analysis, they can only give their support to one side or other in this struggle. Thus during the growth of the mass movement of noncooperation the petty bourgeoisie gave their support to the rising class struggle of the masses. In the surrender at Bardoli and the whole of the subsequent retreat, they followed the lead of the capitalists who were

afraid of the masses and gave their support to the class demands (fiscal autonomy, protection, industrialisation, etc.) of the Indian capitalists who were preparing for a bargain with British imperialism.

Thus we see both the essential falsity and the actual significance of the statement of Sasmal that "the longer the rulers delay in settling with the intelligentsia of this land the chances of this revolution will draw nearer". The statement is false, for the petty bourgeoisie (including the intelligentsia) can in no way influence the ultimate causes of the developing class struggle between the exploited masses and the capitalist exploiters and certainly cannot prevent its outcome by their "settling" with the British rulers. The statement is, however, significant for it implies that the policy of the petty bourgeoisie is consciously to support the forces of capitalism, to make a bargain with the British rulers in order to thwart the rising revolt of the oppressed class.

Such a policy would recoil on the heads of the petty bourgeoisie themselves. They themselves are exploited, dominated and terrorised by alien imperialism and their position can in reality only be improved by the overthrow of the latter. It is fantastic to believe that British imperialism will "settle" with them, will grant them privileges in the vain hope that they will stem the tide of revolt among the toiling masses. This ridiculous delusion is the only meaning that can be ascribed to the sentence of Sasmal that we have quoted and it is the only meaning to be attached to his conception of "ideal" revolution, meaning a revolution without class struggle or the participation of the masses.

It is a characteristic of sections of the petty bourgeoisie all over the world to live in a world divorced from reality, to dream dreams and to imagine social transformations taking place in vacuo without reference to the existing position of classes and the class struggle. Representatives of an impotent class, as far as decisive influence on the development of the class struggle is concerned, they shrink from the harsh cruelties of the existing struggle and prefer to take refuge in utopian abstractions believing that

they are thereby exhibiting depth of thought and independence of mind. It is not in England alone that the petty bourgeoisie refuses to recognise the realities of the class situation. Everywhere they deny the existence of the struggle while the world is toppling about their ears in the course of the most widespread class warfare that has ever been witnessed, they preach class-harmony and look for class-conciliation and collaboration when in every country the struggle between the antagonistic forces is reaching a stage of actual civil war.

Sasmal speaks for these elements of the petty bourgeoisie who hope for the overthrow of imperialism but are not ready to face the issues involved in a real struggle for this object. The real struggle cannot be conducted by the big bourgeoisie which is sold to imperialism, it cannot be conducted by the petty bourgeoisie which has neither numerical strength nor economic power, and therefore it can only be achieved by the masses whose methods, however, will be crude, full of mistakes, straightforward and forceful but not in the least "ideal". The petty bourgeoisie, nevertheless, stand only to gain by siding with the masses, by assisting and leading their struggle.

On what basis can such a struggle be jointly conducted to the mutual benefit of both sections? Only on the basis of a revolutionary-democratic theory. Only such a basis will permit of the removal of foreign exploitation, the freeing of the workers and peasants from the relics of feudal slavery, and the freeing of the petty bourgeoisie from the tyrannies of feudal power and unequal privilege. The example of China should be sufficient to show the necessity and value of such a democratic struggle. The greatness of Sun Yat-sen is just that he was able to combine all the progressive forces in China in a united anti-imperialist struggle. He could not do this except on the basis of a sincere revolutionary-democratic program.

It is worth while to quote once more Lenin's characterisation written in 1912 of the program of Sun Yat-sen:

"Every line of Sun Yat-sen's program is imbued with a militant sincere democratic spirit. There is full comprehension of the inadequacy of a 'race' revolution. There

is not one iota of antipolitical reasoning, or even the admittance of the idea of compatibility of Chinese 'social reform' with Chinese constitutional transformations, etc. There are genuine democratic conceptions, with the demand for a republic. There is a direct presentation of the question of the position of the masses, the question of the mass struggle. There is warm sympathy for the toiling masses and the exploited, belief in the legitimacy of their cause and in their strength."

We have regretfully to admit that nothing so clear has yet been accepted as the basis of our anti-imperialist struggle. The time is however fast approaching when these factors so long neglected will have to be taken into account and then it will be possible for all the advanced forces to unite for a revolution that will be real and not merely "ideal" and that will be welcomed by an overwhelming proportion of our countrymen and not dreaded by them.

The Masses of India

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18. CRYSTALLISATION OF THE LEFT WING

The gulf between the leadership and the rank and file of the Swaraj Party grows wider every day. This process is particularly noticeable in Bengal. In the Krishnanagar conference the divergence assumed a rather ugly manifestation. The party was threatened with a split. The issue apparently was the hindu-muslim pact. Although the controversy over the pact involved serious political and tactical questions, it was but a manifestation of something still more serious and fundamental. It indicated the revolt of the rank and file against the leadership, and this revolt is due to the conflict of classes inside

the nationalist movement. The revolutionary intellectuals (including the students), as the spokesmen of the ruined and exploited lower middle classes, are getting impatient of the impotent constitutionalism of the swarajist leadership. The interests of the middle class do not coincide with the interests of the big bourgeoisie. While compromise with imperialism will be beneficial to the interests of the big bourgeoisie, the salvation of the middle class is in complete democratisation of the country, but the foreign rule must be completely overthrown before the process of real democratisation can begin. The official policy of the Swaraj Party has always been to drag the middle class in the wake of the nationalist bourgeoisie. The revolt inside the Swaraj Party, which manifests itself in more than one form and on more than one issue, is essentially against this policy. The middle class is becoming too politically conscious to do the bidding of the big bourgeoisie who sacrifice national interests for their class interest.

The revolt is becoming alarming and the party leadership can no longer remain indifferent. On the eve of the Krishnanagar conference the swarajist central organ, *Forward* (28 May) in an editorial on "The Work Before US" admitted the crisis inside the party. It wrote: "There is a certain amount of dissatisfaction in their ranks (of Congress workers) because some of the more important items in the Swaraj Party's program have not yet been given effect to. The work inside the legislative council has up to now engrossed so much attention that the more important work of village reconstruction including the starting of peasant and labour unions has had to be neglected."

The *Forward*, of course, does not go further than recognising the existence of discontent. It argues that the rebel ranks do not appreciate the "difficulties of those at the helm" and opines that this discontent "is but the manifestation of youthful exuberance and impatient idealism". But, as a matter of fact, it is neither of them. The cause of the revolt is pointed out by the *Forward* itself. It is the negligence of the Swaraj Party to act according to the "more important items of its program". The swarajist

program contains items reflecting the interests of the bourgeoisie and landed aristocracy. There are also items focusing the demands of the people. The latter items attracted the middle class to the Swaraj Party. But in action the items of the swarajist program of village reconstruction remained a dead letter, and defence of capitalist and land-owning interest became the program of the Swaraj Party. Too much attention to parliamentary activity placed the party entirely at the mercy of the upper classes, for no other class in India has the right to vote. The Swaraj Party could not expect to get the vote of the capitalist and landed classes should it do anything to carry out the program of organising the workers and peasantry.

The demands of the people cannot be realised—not even pressed—through the parliamentary institutions. The battles for national freedom must be fought on a field where larger forces can be mobilised. Through the sham parliamentary organs the nationalist movement only goes toward compromise with imperialism. This has been amply demonstrated by the march of events during the last years. Caught in the vicious circle of pseudoparliamentarism, the Swaraj Party completely turned its back on the oppressed and exploited 98 per cent and became the spokesman of the well-to-do 2 per cent. This development naturally shook the faith of those elements in the Swaraj Party that are inspired by ideals of popular freedom. Here lies the root of the revolt. It is imbedded in the conflict of class interest and, therefore, grows acuter in proportion as the class contradiction inside the nationalist movement becomes sharper. The situation does not improve a bit by declaring the revolutionaries untouchable, as was done at the Krishnanagar conference, nor by the policy of expulsion which was practised at the Bengal provincial congress committee meeting in Calcutta. The opposition inside the Swaraj Party is a healthy organic growth. It is inevitable. Popular interests demand the crystallisation of a leftwing revolt against the policy of bourgeois nationalism.

The overwhelming majority of our people are unfranchised. Little over 2 per cent of the population have the

right to vote in the election for the provincial legislative councils. In the case of the assembly the franchise is still narrower. The right to vote in the council election belongs to—in urban constituencies—to those adult male persons occupying a house as owner or tenant, of an average rental value of 56 rupees or of worth not less than 1500 rupees; in the rural constituencies those paying the average annual land rent of 20 rupees are counted as voters. Besides, all paying income tax are qualified to vote. Pensioned army officers also possess the right to vote. Now, what proportion of our population possess this relatively high property qualification? A very small proportion—a little over 2 per cent. A party, which stakes its fate on a parliamentary majority, must act according to the interest of this small enfranchised minority. It is bound to be a political organ of the upper classes and as such willingly or not betray the interests of the people. This exactly is what has happened to the Swaraj Party. Therefore the leftwing revolt predominantly takes the form of opposition to the council policy and the related tactics such as the hindu-muslim pact.

The Karmi Sangha, which voices the leftwing opposition, accuses the Swaraj Party of "fascination of the councils". Speaking at the karmisangha conference at Krishnanagar, T. C. Goswami raised the question of the future policy of the Swaraj Party in regard to the council policy. He expressed his belief that the original swarajist program of concentrating major attention to village reconstruction had been sacrificed and a "certain fascination for the councils has been growing". He also stated that all nationalist work outside the councils had been neglected. From this he drew the conclusion that should it be impossible to carry on simultaneously with equal vigour both sides of the Swaraj Party program, preference must be given to the work outside the council.

Here is formulated the point of view that the most effective method of the nationalist movement is mass agitation. Once the Swaraj Party adopts this method it will have to break with the bourgeoisie. And this is precisely what the demand of the left wing means. A party trim-

ming its sails according to the interests of the franchised minority cannot lead the popular movement for freedom. Class antagonism and conflict of interests stand in the way. It is true that the position of the left wing is not yet clear. It does not demand a break with the bourgeoisie. But it demands that the basis of the nationalist movement should be broadened; that parliamentarism should be supplemented, if necessary replaced, by mass agitation. The middle class led by the revolutionary intellectuals put forward this demand, because there is no room for them in the comfortable council chambers, nor are their interests voiced there. They demand that the nationalist movement should be so broadened as to make a place for them—to provide a political expression to their revolutionary inclinations. They demand that the nationalist program should be so recast as to reflect their interest.

While thus voicing the objective demand of the revolutionary popular forces the left wing, however, is still politically immature. Its position is predominantly negative. It has not yet been able to formulate a program of action which will transform the Swaraj Party from a politically bankrupt election apparatus to a powerful party of the people. It does not challenge the swarajist program on its merits. It fails to see that the present plight of the Swaraj Party (betrayal of the people's interests, capitulation to capitalism and all) was predetermined by the very nature of the swarajist program. The opposition is only to the method of application of the program.

"Village reconstruction" is the only positive program to which the opposition turns. We have repeatedly pointed out the reactionary nature of this program. At best it is a program which cannot be realised. Obviously the revolutionary element in the nationalist movement have not carefully examined the program. They have taken it on its face value. But to be able to rescue the nationalist movement from the rut of pseudoparlamentarism the left wing must be more analytical. The revolutionary nationalists vaguely recognise the necessity of "going to the masses". The program of "village reconstruction" opens before them a way to the masses. Therefore they are of

the opinion that should the Swaraj Party take up work of village reconstruction, everything would be all right—a long step would be taken towards national freedom. This is, however, not true. The swarajist program of village reconstruction will not produce any better result than that of parliamentary obstruction. They would-be leaders of the struggle for freedom should be more analytical.

Ever since it was coined by C. R. Das "village reconstruction" has become an oft-used catch phrase. Nobody has ever explained how the village should be and could be reconstructed. The Swaraj Party officially has kept silence on the question. Indian villages are a scene of ruinous poverty. Poverty is the root of all evils that eats into the vitals of the rural population. What causes the chronic poverty of the rural population? High rent, insecure tenancy, and usurers' greed. Those who propose to combat the poverty of our rural population must eradicate these triple causes. This, in its turn, cannot be done without attacking the vested interests of the landowning class and the capitalist system which has penetrated the remotest village through the intermediary of the trader and moneylender. In other words, the interests of the 72 per cent of our population living a miserable life on land demands a revolutionary fight with foreign imperialism and native landlordism and the intermediaries through whom they operate. A program of village reconstruction based on the principles of philanthropy and humanitarianism will be as reactionary as futile. Philanthropic village reformers propose to teach the people to make virtue of necessity. They seek to allay the growing discontent of the rural masses by hypocritical acts of charity. A social evil caused by century-old brutal exploitation cannot be cured by sinking a few wells, opening a few night schools and distributing some drops of homeopathic medicine. It requires a radical remedy. The parasite that eats into the vitals of the peasantry must be attacked and destroyed. There you have the key to the situation.

The ruined Indian village cannot be reconstructed as the old selfcontained economic unit. Selfcontained villages are a thing of the past. Commodities produced by

machine cannot be kept out of the village. They have disrupted the primitive industrial organisation of the village. The process of disruption cannot be arrested; on the contrary it will go ahead relentlessly. Any desire or endeavour to stop this process is futile. It is reactionary because it proposes to defend an antiquated form of production against the inevitable rise of progressive forces. Machine production is immensely more progressive than manual production. It frees man from drudgery and enables him to devote his energies to cultural aspects of life. But machine production causes ruin to the working class because it has so far operated on the basis of private ownership. Freed from capitalist control, machinery will be an agency of freedom for mankind.

"Village reconstruction", therefore, is not a suitable and adequate program of the left wing. It is not suitable, because the left wing represents the revolutionary social class and this cannot have an essentially reactionary program. It is inadequate because it does not open up a field of healthy activity on a mass scale. The rural program of the left wing should be the program of agrarian revolution. The revolutionary intellectuals seek their way to the masses. They want to place the nationalist movement on the broad basis of mass action. They should, then, voice the objective demands of the peasantry. The interests of the peasant masses demand lower rent, security of tenure and freedom from the usurers' greed. The left wing should go to the villages with a program based on these three demands of the peasantry. If they can have the courage to do this, they will be the vanguard of a revolutionary people's party leading the battle for freedom to victory.

The peasantry is a very important factor in the struggle for national freedom. Without a revolutionary agrarian program the nationalist movement will remain powerless. But there is another social factor which is still more important than the peasantry. It is the urban proletariat. Without minimising the importance of work among the peasantry, the middleclass revolutionaries should make a united front with the proletariat. Having

nothing to lose but their chains of wage-slavery the proletariat is the most revolutionary social class and as such will act as the vanguard of the fight for democratic national freedom. Bourgeois-nationalists (including the Swaraj Party) propose to organise labour not for the defence of the working class, but to fight any revolutionary tendency in the labour movement. They want to use the proletariat as pawn in their own game. Those who still entertain the illusion that the nationalist movement can become a revolutionary mass movement if the swarajist program of "organising peasant and labour unions" is realised, should remember what C. R. Das said at Gaya while enunciating that program. He said: "If the Congress does not take up the work, you may expect to find organisations set up by labourers and peasants, which will inevitably bring within the arena of the peaceful revolution, class struggle and the war of special interests. To avoid that disgraceful issue let us take labour and the peasantry in hand."

The object cannot be more clearly stated. Workers and peasants should be organised not to advance the cause of revolution, but as a bulwark against revolution. B. N. Sasmal in his Krishnanagar speech expressed similar sentiments when he referred to the awakening of the masses. That is how the bourgeoisie approach the question of relations with the exploited masses. Theirs is the viewpoint of exploitation, class domination. But the revolutionary intellectuals and ruined middle class cannot have the same angle of vision on the combination of social forces. The left wing is a product of class struggle inside the Swaraj Party (not to mention the entire nationalist movement)—of the conflict of special interest. It therefore cannot have the same hypocritical outlook on class issues. The oppressing class sings the hymn of harmony, harmony being the preservation of its dominating position. The oppressed revolt. The middle class particularly in India, is oppressed and exploited. They cannot march forever in the wake of the bourgeoisie. They are revolting. This revolt will be fruitful only if it is linked up with the revolt of the other exploited and expropriat-

ed class—the working class. The crystallisation of the left wing inside the Swaraj Party indicates the beginning of a united people's front in the fight for freedom.

The Masses of India

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19. THE ELECTIONS AND THE MASSES

The majority of our nationalist heroes of the assembly and councils claim that they go into these bodies in order to represent the interests of the masses of the people. According to the theory of democracy, if the assembly were the supreme organ of the nation, and if its members were elected by the universal votes of the free and equal citizens of the country, the masses would be fully represented. Neither of these two conditions is at present fulfilled. Consequently, and especially because the members of the legislatures are elected by, and represent the will of, only a minute fraction of the population, it is impossible that they can interpret the desires of the masses. Moreover, the simple theory of democracy takes no account of the influence of class divisions. The economically powerful class of capitalists and landlords has different interests to those of the industrial workers, landless labourers and poor peasants whom they exploit, and they use their power also to control the conditions and machinery of democracy. Where capitalism prevails, the democratically elected representatives of the people represent in reality the class to which they belong. In India, where the masses are from the outset ruled out from a voice in the legislatures, this happens to a very marked degree. Candidates like to stress their business or commercial standing as a qualification for election. As one example out of many we mention the election address of H. J. Laljee who assures muslims of Bombay that he will examine all proposed

legislation "from the business point of view" and he quotes as a model the business government of Great Britain. He believes he is thereby "serving his people and country for their betterment and advancement". Actually he is only serving the interests of his class. A claim of readiness to serve the country cannot be justified by mere high-sounding talk, as the swarajists are so ready to imagine, but only by defining concretely the issues on which it is proposed the fight shall be waged. In this connection, a pleasant exception to the usual run of election addresses is that of Jitendra Lal Banerji, who boldly declares the measures that he would support for the protection of the exploited tenants against the extortions of usurers and landlords. The future will show how far his assurances are realised in practice.

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20. ELECTIONS IN INDIA

M. N. ROY

The campaign which is proceeding at the moment of writing, in connection with the third general election to the parliamentary bodies in India, introduced by the reforms of 1919, is the most outstanding feature of the Indian political life. During the last year the nationalist movement has been torn asunder by a controversy on this question. No less than six parties, all calling themselves "nationalist", are participating in the election.

The reforms granted in 1919 established in India the central legislative assembly and legislative councils in the nine provinces. The franchise on which the provincial legislative councils are based embrace little less than five million people, that is, 2.2 per cent of the entire popula-

tion is represented in these parliamentary bodies. The central legislative assembly is based on a still narrower franchise, the electorate for that body being less than two million. The right of vote is determined by property qualifications which are excessively high in relation to the very low economic condition of the Indian masses. The electorate includes the landowning class, the big bourgeoisie, a section of the upper intellectuals and a small stratum of rich peasantry.

When the reforms were first granted, they were boycotted by the nationalist movement. It was considered that the reforms were very inadequate to meet the situation, that they did not come anywhere near the self-government promised by British imperialism during the war. Only the landowning class and the upper stratum of the bourgeoisie accepted the reforms. The first legislative assembly and councils were therefore composed entirely of the representatives of these two classes. Less than 20 per cent of the electorate participated in the elections. Under these conditions the legislative bodies were naturally very docile and supported the British government in suppressing the nationalist movement led by Gandhi under the slogan of passive resistance.

The strength of the nationalist movement during the years following the conclusion of the war was the widespread revolutionary discontent of the masses. The boycott of the pseudoparliamentary institutions only reflected the grievances of a section of the bourgeoisie and the middleclass intellectuals. Nevertheless these elements were the leaders of the entire nationalist movement which was very revolutionary owing to its mass composition. The conflict between nonrevolutionary, timid, petty-bourgeois leadership and the dynamic forces of the mass following, eventually led to the collapse of that big movement. The result was dissatisfaction against the program of boycott, and, in course of time, this dissatisfaction crystallised into a definite demand for the repudiation of the boycott program. The bourgeois and the petty-bourgeois elements in the noncooperation movement parted company with the revolutionary masses and decided to enter the

legislative councils, ostensibly with the object of opposing the British autocracy through that channel.

The nationalist movement was split on the issue of entering the legislative councils. The section that advocated participation in the ensuing elections with the purpose of capturing the legislative bodies, at the end of 1922 constituted themselves into the Swaraj Party. A year later, the second election took place. The Swaraj Party contested the election but failed to get a majority in the central legislative assembly. Of all the nine provincial councils, only in one was a clear swarajist majority returned. In another province the Swaraj Party became the single largest party and with the support of other radical nationalist elements formed an opposition bloc.

The Swaraj Party entered the legislative councils with a program of blocking the administrative machinery by constant and consistent opposition. It pledged itself not to accept ministerial office. During the lifetime (three years) of the second legislative, the policy of obstruction was gradually abandoned, just as previously the policy of boycott had also been abandoned. Towards the end of the term the Swaraj Party was rent by the controversy over the acceptance of office. A very strong right wing had developed inside the party which declared that the policy of obstruction had proved impracticable and that the logical consequence of entering the councils was to accept the responsibility of government.

In the central government the question of accepting office does not rise because all the members of the government are appointed by the viceroy. The reform has introduced a peculiar system of government in the provinces. The government is divided into two parts—one appointed by the governor and acting independently of the legislative council; the other, also appointed by the governor but subordinated to the council to the extent that their salary is to be voted by the council. The second part of the government is responsible for the local selfgovernment, sanitation, education and agriculture—the so-called "nation-building departments". Now the controversy is whether

the nationalists should accept the responsibility for administering these nation-building departments.

The experience of the last three years has proven that even with a nationalist majority the legislative councils do not possess the power to shake the position of imperialism. Real state power is beyond the control of these legislative councils. The purpose with which these legislative bodies have been set up is to draw the upper classes of the Indian population closer to imperialism. The economic concessions made to the Indian bourgeoisie since the war have effectively reconciled the contradiction between imperialism and native capitalism. This being the case the legislative bodies representing the Indian landowning and capitalist classes cannot be the organ of nationalist opposition; they are bound to be the medium through which a compromise between bourgeois nationalism and imperialist domination will be realised.

When the Swaraj Party decided to enter the legislative councils and staked its future on the success of parliamentary victory, it bound itself entirely to the dictates of the narrow and enfranchised minority, that is, the landowning and capitalist classes. Now the landowning and capitalist classes find it convenient to come to an agreement with British imperialism in order to have a period of political peace conducive to the development to trade and industry. Any party seeking the vote of the landowning and capitalist classes must act according to the demands of these classes. The Swaraj Party is disintegrated owing to the contradiction between the necessity to have the support of the landlords and the bourgeoisie, and the desire to have a broad nationalist following by means of radical phraseology and opposition to the British bureaucracy.

As a matter of fact, on principle, even the Swaraj Party has agreed to accept office and work the reforms which were rejected as totally inadequate only six years ago. But the big bourgeoisie without whose support no party can have a majority in the parliamentary bodies demand a clear statement of program. They demand that the task of the nationalist politics should be to come to a

speedy agreement with imperialism. A large section of the Swaraj Party has accepted this order of the bourgeoisie. They have declared unconditionally in favour of accepting the office. Of the six parties participating in the election five are united into a bourgeois bloc against the Swaraj Party which still formally maintains its position—not to accept office.

But it is a foregone conclusion that under the present franchise it is not at all likely for the Swaraj Party to secure an independent majority.

The leaders of the Swaraj Party have often stated that the policy of the party will have to be changed after the results of the election are known. That is, if the Swaraj Party loses in the election, as it is almost sure to, it will change its policy according to the interests of the bourgeoisie.

But the social basis of the Swaraj Party is the middle-class intellectuals and the urban petty bourgeoisie. These are largely unfranchised. Side by side with the development of the consciously bourgeois right wing there has been a marked revolutionary left wing crystallisation among the rank and file. A defeat in the election will strengthen the position of the left wing which has been protesting against the parliamentary degeneration of the party.

The Swaraj Party is formally a part of the National Congress. In fact, the loose organisation of the National Congress has, during the last two years, been used by the Swaraj Party as its election machine. The incongruity of the situation is obvious. An organisation mainly of unfranchised masses is being used as an instrument of the bourgeoisie. This situation cannot continue for ever. The annual session of the National Congress will be held at the end of December, that is, immediately after the results of the election are known. The Swaraj Party will have to appear before the National Congress and have the change of its policy approved. It is sure to meet with great difficulties. As soon as the bourgeois leaders of the Swaraj Party will appear before the National Congress with a resolution approving acceptance of office, the

mask will be pulled down. The contradiction between the interests of the bourgeoisie and those of the masses including the middle class will stand out in all its nakedness. This will open the eyes of the left wing who till now are not quite free from the influence of bourgeois nationalism.

Of course, it will be premature to state that the coming session of the Indian National Congress will mark a turningpoint in the history of this nationalist struggle. But what is indisputable is that the process of class differentiation inside the nationalist ranks had advanced so far that it is no longer possible for the bourgeois leaders to dominate the entire nationalist movement. The revolutionary left wing may not be able to capture the leadership of the movement this year but it will certainly shake the position of the bourgeois leaders.

The growing activity of the proletariat and a renewed wave of peasant revolt objectively strengthens the position of the revolutionary wing of the nationalist movement. The petty-bourgeois radical element inside the nationalist movement will not be able to overthrow successfully the compromising bourgeois leadership until they come into closer contact with the proletariat and the peasantry. The work for the formation of this united fighting front is going on in spite of all difficulties. The political organisation of the working class is advancing satisfactorily. It is on this organisation that the task of uniting the petty-bourgeois revolutionary nationalists with the worker and peasant masses into a fighting united front devolves.

21. INDIAN NATIONALISM AND THE ELECTIONS

CLEMENS DUTT

India is a country of 300 million inhabitants which has been on the brink of a social revolution. That fact, with all its significance for the British empire, Asia and the world, is the dominating factor for appreciating what is taking place in India today. It is natural, therefore, to measure the stages of development since the war from the abortive upheaval of 1920-21. The betrayal by bourgeois nationalism of the mass movement at Bardoli in February 1922 is the startingpoint of a retreat which has put the revolution temporarily in the background, but which will have the effect for its delay of making the next explosion more forceful, conscious and effective. For nothing in the central features of the situation has been changed, but there has been rapid economic development, which has produced a corresponding development in class differentiation and class consciousness.

This differentiation is expressed in the stages since Bardoli through which the nationalist movement has passed. Up to the close of the present year three such stages can be distinguished. The first period from Bardoli to the Gaya session of the National Congress in December 1922, when the Swaraj Party was launched, was the period of retreat from gandhism and the formulation of a new policy for bourgeois nationalism. The second period was a further stage of clarification marked by the gradual modification of swarajist policy during its experience of parliamentarism and reversion to liberalism. It culminated in the acceptance of government office and the resignation from the Swaraj Party in the autumn of 1925 by Mr Tambe the swarajist leader in the Central Provinces (the only province in which the swarajists had a majority in the legislature), which thus opened the new period of differentiation marked by the splitting of the nationalist ranks and the formation of new parties. The imminence of this new phase was pointed out in an article in the *Labour Monthly* in the summer of last year. The rapid developments of

this phase will reach a conclusion in the results of the elections now being held and in the decisions of the forthcoming national congress at Gauhati in Assam.

The economic characteristics of this period are a continuation of the preceding one. There has been a series of good monsoons, which has meant that harvests have been satisfactory (an all-important question in India, where the exploited mass of peasants have no reserve to fall back upon) and which, in the resulting absence of famine and consequent economic crisis, has allowed of the establishment of relative stabilisation. Economic development has proceeded rapidly and the policy of economic rapprochement and reconciliation between British imperialism and the Indian big bourgeoisie, determined upon by the former ever since it discovered in the first shock of the war that it would have to be dependent for vital iron and steel products on the Indian firm of Tata, has gone further ahead. Salient features of the recent period have been the establishment of the Indian tariff board and the abolition of the cotton excise duty. Nothing marks the new era of the development of Indian industries behind high tariff walls more clearly than this last step, for the whole history of the Indian National Congress has been bound up with the struggle of Indian capitalism for the removal of the cotton excise.

The results of the new economic situation are obvious in recent political history. Agrarian agitation, the centre of the previous mass movement, has been relatively quiescent. The Indian bourgeoisie, discovering that political freedom is not so indispensable for the furtherance of their immediate economic interests as they had previously imagined, are more disposed to be satisfied for the present with the existing constitution, and therefore to "work the reforms". At the same time, the left wing in the nationalist movement has become more articulate as it has begun to realise the direction in which the nationalist leaders are going. Moreover, in spite of the legal terrorism exercised against the communists, the Indian Communist Party has grown in strength, and sympathetic nationalist groups, such as the Workers' and Peasants' Party in Bengal, have ex-

tended their influence. A complicating political factor, which reached its maximum intensity during the last year, has been the unprecedented growth of communal conflict between hindus and muslims, resulting in religious riots in which thousands of persons have been killed or injured. This communal tension is closely connected with the political differences in the nationalist ranks.

THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM

All the factors above mentioned affect the present general elections to the imperial and provincial legislatures and go to make the elections more complex than at any time previously. The first elections in 1920 were boycotted by all except the loyalist upper stratum of the bourgeoisie. In the second general election, in 1923, the new Swaraj Party was the sole representative of the National Congress. Now the nationalist ranks are divided into a number of different warring parties or factions, each claiming to represent the nation and to speak in the name of the nationalist movement and the National Congress, and seeking seats and positions of power in the legislatures at the expense of its opponents. They quarrel and compete among themselves for the chance of getting into the councils, and they roundly denounce the government for not giving them more power when in the councils, but they neglect to attack or even to notice the essential feature of the councils, viz the enormously restricted franchise on which they are based, which make them something aloof from, and useless to, the vast body of the nation.

The character of the elections, and the social composition of the membership of the councils themselves, is above all determined by the nature of the electorate. The restricted franchise is based on both communal and property qualifications. There are also special constituencies for electing representatives of Europeans, big landlords and big commercial and industrial organisations.

Take, for example, the Bengal legislative council. First of all, out of 139 members only 113 are elected at all. The

remainder are government nominees, the remnant of the old system in which the members of the legislative council were all merely "advisers" appointed by the provincial governor. Of the 113 elected representatives, only eighty-five are elected by general, though communal, constituencies. The whole province is divided into forty-two geographical areas forming non-mohammedan constituencies in which no mohammedan, even if otherwise qualified, is allowed to vote. The same province is also divided geographically into thirty-four constituencies in which only mohammedans can vote. This separation is applied throughout practically the whole of British India, and is intended to ensure representation of the special interests of the muslims. It, of course, considerably assists in dividing them off from the rest of the population.

The rest of the elected members, twenty-eight in number, are returned by special constituencies. Europeans, numbering less than 25,000 in a total population 46,000,000, have five representatives. The Bengal Chamber of Commerce returns six members. The big landowners of Burdwan, Chittagong, & c, each elect a representative of their own. The Indian Jute Mills Association, the Indian Tea Association, the Indian Mining Association, Calcutta University, the Calcutta Trades Association, the Marwari Association are all reckoned as special constituencies. Most of these special representatives will be Europeans, and all will stand for big capitalist or landlord interests.

The number of voters in the special constituencies will be very small. They constitute, in this respect, something very like the "pocket" boroughs of prereform England. On the other hand, the vast bulk of the workers and peasants are totally disfranchised. The property qualification for voters varies from region to region but it is sufficiently high to exclude ninetyseven to ninetyeight per cent of the population. Take the Bombay rural constituencies as an example. The essential qualification for an elector is payment of land revenue amounting to not less than sixteen to thirtytwo rupees per annum, according to region. As the land revenue for the total assessed area in Bombay presidency varies from half to one-and-a-quarter rupees per

acre, it can be concluded that only cultivators of some fifteen acres or more will be entitled to a vote. Recent statistics show that three-quarters of all the Bombay holdings are below fifteen acres. All these cultivators, therefore, would be disfranchised together with the large number of landless wage-workers and agricultural labourers.

For the all-India legislative assembly the franchise is even more restricted. Only 104 out of 144 members are elected. All but two or three of the general constituencies are separated on communal lines. Most of the provinces have special constituencies of Europeans and of big landholders, and special representation is given to the Indian Merchants' Chamber and Bureau, Ahmedabad Mill-owners' Association, Madras Indian Commerce, Bengal Marwari Association, etc.

Urban electors to the assembly have to pay income tax (not levied on incomes below 2000 rupees per year) or a high rate of other taxes, while the rural electors must pay land revenue of fifty rupees or upwards. The result of the restrictions is that the total electorate for all the seats in the assembly is below a million, there being only a few thousand voters for each seat.

It must not be forgotten also that the central legislature includes an upper chamber, the council of state, with sixty members, of whom thirtyfour are elected. Electors to this body must be very rich or have been members of the central legislature or held high office in municipal government. The electorate numbers a few hundreds in each constituency. Thus in a byelection earlier this year in West Bengal, the successful candidate polled seventyeight votes; the remaining three received fiftyeight, twenty-six, and one votes respectively.

Without taking any account, therefore, of the question of the authority of the councils, it is obvious that they are utterly unrepresentative in character and cannot be an index of the desires of the mass of the nation.

THE BREAK-UP OF THE SWARAJ PARTY

Nevertheless the attention of the nationalist movement has become more and more exclusively directed to obtain-

ing control of these puppet legislatures. The forty-odd swarajists that entered the central legislative assembly in 1923 were very quickly deflected from their early intransigence. By the autumn of 1925 the desire of the right wing for a drastic modification of the program, so as to allow of the acceptance of the office and the practice of the so-called policy of "responsive cooperation" (i.e. the policy of working the constitutional reforms scheme as far as possible, and only voting against the government when British policy conflicted directly with the immediate interests of the Indian bourgeoisie), led to a crisis in the party when the sessions began.

In November the Bombay swarajist leaders, Jayakar and N. C. Kelkar, resigned and at the National Congress at Kanpur in December 1925, there was a definite bloc, led by the Mahrattas from Bombay and the Central Provinces and Berar, calling for a modification of the program. The National Congress, however, in spite of its smaller numbers, represents a wider field than the electorate of the assembly, and it endorsed the official swarajist policy. Thereupon the dissidents seceded from the Swaraj Party and organised the Responsive Cooperation Party, which was definitely launched on 2 February 1926.

The liberals were not slow in attempting to profit from the situation by forming a bloc with the responsive-cooperationists aimed against the Swaraj Party. The new alliance, formed in March 1926, was christened the Indian National Party, and it contained representatives of the liberals, the independents, the Home Rule League, led by Mrs Besant (to all intents and purposes identical with the liberals, but united in pushing the commonwealth of India bill), the nonbrahmins, the Muslim League and the responsivists. The latter, however, only gave a qualified support to the new party, retaining their separate identity. The real difference of the responsivists from the liberals lay only in the fact that they were still members of the National Congress, and they were aware that if they lost their connection with the Congress they would be considered purely as liberals, and as such less trustworthy and experienced than the old liberal leaders.

The other groups in the National Party, with one exception, were outside the National Congress, and they based their refusal to have anything to do with the Congress on the grounds: (1) that the present congress creed still endorses mass civil disobedience and general nonpayment of taxes as a policy for which the country should make preparations; (2) that the Congress is still dominated by the Swaraj Party, which is committed to a policy of obstruction; (3) that they cannot agree to enter the Congress unless they get an adequate share of the congress offices; and, finally, (4) that wearing of khaddar (homespun cloth) is still compulsory at congress functions (a last relic of the period of Gandhi's domination).

The only semiliberal leader of note who remained within the Congress was Pandit Malaviya, who even during the most revolutionary period fought the liberal battle inside the Congress, and who has been pressing for the adoption of a congress program which would embrace all shades of nationalism.

Faced with the possibility of a union of the secessionists from the Swaraj Party with the liberals, Pandit Nehru, the swarajist leader, attempted a compromise which would break up this union, and, by practically giving in to the responsivists, draw them back into the Swaraj Party. This compromise was formulated in the Sabarmati pact, signed at Ahmedabad on 21 April 1926.

The swarajist leader, however, had underestimated the strength of the left wing within his party. The all-India congress committee, which comprises 350 members, mostly local congress officials who are closer to the rank and file of the congress membership and not directly interested in the question of parliamentary office, refused to ratify the pact. They showed their distrust of Nehru also in their action in defeating his resolution for a committee to inquire into Mrs Besant's commonwealth bill. Since Mrs Besant had seceded from the Congress over the noncooperation issue and her scheme was being canvassed by various liberals and other groups without the endorsement of the Congress, Pandit Nehru's action attempting to

raise the matter was a clear indication of his rightwing tendency, and the defeat of his resolution was a clear vote of no-confidence in him.

The existence of a left wing within the National Congress and the Swaraj Party, which prevents the leadership from openly entering into cooperation with the government, has been evident at all the larger congress gatherings. Under the spinning franchise introduced by Gandhi the registered membership of the Congress dropped to about 14,000, and even though the four-anna subscription was reintroduced in 1925, the paying membership at the time of the Kanpur congress was still under 20,000. Nevertheless the rank and file, comprising mainly petty-bourgeois elements, was sufficiently in evidence to compel the swarajist leaders to adopt a revolutionary pharaseology, to talk of the preparation of mass civil disobedience and to declare that the Swaraj Party would leave the legislative councils if their demands were unheeded by the government.

It was this left wing that called Pandit Nehru to heel. It was this left wing that at the Bengal provincial congress in May 1926 began an agitation against Sengupta, the Bengal leader, because of his rightwing tendencies, and even moved a resolution of protest at the disparaging remarks of the president, Sasmal, concerning the ex-revolutionaries in the Bengal congress organisation.

The latest stage in the disintegration of the Swaraj Party has followed the fiasco of the party's method of putting into practice the resolution of the Kanpur congress for withdrawing from the councils.

In order to make a demonstration to impress the rank and file, and to hide their bankruptcy in policy, the swarajist members of the assembly and of the provincial councils made a spectacular withdrawal in March, thus, incidentally, saving themselves the task of voting against the budget, which many of them were loath to do. It was not long, however, before the members in most of the councils were clamouring for permission to return in order to defend or oppose certain measures. Permission was given, for otherwise there would have been many defections from the party, and it is noteworthy that in all cases the walk back

was openly for the defence of class interests. Thus, in the Punjab, the swarajists returned to oppose the money-lenders' bill, which threatened to curtail the power of moneylenders: in Madras the issue was the Malabar tenancy bill, and in Assam a land revenue assessment bill.

Finally, it was decided that the members of the central legislative assembly themselves should return in order to oppose the new currency bill, and then retire again, taking no further part in the last session of the assembly. This led to the latest split in the party, for Lajpat Rai, the veteran nationalist and deputy-leader of the party, refused to walk out again and severed his connection with the party.

This new split meant a serious weakening of the strength of the Swaraj Party. It also gave a new opportunity to Pandit Malaviya. Under his auspices the congress leaders, like himself and Lajpat Rai, who were in the Congress but not in either the swaraj or responsive cooperation parties, began negotiations for unity with both of the latter groups.

It was obvious that Nehru was only deterred by fear of his own rank and file from attempting to conclude a revised form of the Sabarmati pact. Accordingly it was the responsive-cooperationists who first joined hands with Lajpat Rai and Malaviya. Early in September they decided to form an independent congress to unite the rightwing members of the Congress, who were outside the Swaraj Party. They adopted a resolution declaring that, since the policy of wholesale obstruction in the councils had failed, as had also the policy of "walking-out" from the legislatures, and that no basis had been found for unity with the Swaraj Party—

"The only course left open to such members of the Congress as do not agree with the swarajists' policy and program is to form themselves into a separate party within the Congress...

"The policy of the party will be to work the legislatures, defective though their constitution is, for all they are worth and use them for accelerating the establishment of full responsible government.

"It will be open to the party to accept office, provided the

power, responsibility, and initiative necessary for the effective discharge of their duties are secured to the ministers.

"The party will work in full cooperation with the Responsive Cooperation Party."

Lajpat Rai was appointed the president of the new party and Pandit Malaviya its general secretary. The formation of the new party was hailed as a triumph for their principles by the responsivists, though they generally gave as their opinion that it would have been better for Lajpat Rai and his followers to have joined the responsivists altogether.

THE COMMUNAL CONFLICT

The dissensions within the nationalist movement were greatly complicated by the growth of hindu-muslim conflict leading to a series of religious riots in all parts of the country, during which hundreds have been killed and thousands injured. The underlying causes are very complex. Apart from direct economic issues (as in Bengal and the Punjab, where muslim peasants are to a great extent faced by hindu landlords and moneylenders), the conflict has been closely connected with the struggle for political influence between the rival communities. This rivalry has always been fostered by the British government, and it has been deliberately fomented by the nationalist leaders. As long as the common national-revolutionary struggle was in the forefront and government positions were boycotted, rivalry between the communities was not acute. Now, however, communal passions have been deliberately aroused for political purposes. The leaders of each community are competing against each other for positions of influence in the councils and other bodies.

During 1925 hindu and muslim religious organisations developed rapidly. Most of the prominent hindu and muslim nationalist leaders declared it to be their object especially to defend the interests of their coreligionists. In April 1926 Sir Abdur Rahim, a liberal muslim leader in Bengal, formed a Bengal Muslim Party. In May 1926 the Khilafat Conference, which had been more or less in abeyance since the abolition of the khilafat, enlarged its objects

to embrace all the interests, temporal as well as spiritual, of mohammedans. In June the chief hindu organisation, the Hindu Mahasabha, countered by deciding where necessary for support of hindu interests, to run its own candidates at the elections. In August an Independent Muslim Party was formed through the agency of the Khilafat Committee to contest the elections on behalf of muslim interests. It consists now largely of former muslim swarajists.

THE ELECTIONS

From what has been said it will be clear that the candidates for election to the councils and assembly are appearing under a great variety of labels. The differences between them are, however, not very important. All of them profess to stand on a nationalist platform, and now that the most extreme swarajist demand has been whittled down to dominion status or even merely an encouragement for "honourable cooperation", the swarajists do not stand so far removed from the most rightwing moderates. The parties can be divided into three main groups, representing roughly the three sections of the Indian bourgeoisie. The big bourgeoisie dominate the liberal and national parties; the responsive cooperationists and the Independent Congress Party stand for the middle bourgeoisie; while the Swaraj Party is predominantly petty bourgeois in composition and out look.

The National Party is practically indistinguishable from the liberals. It represents merely an election bloc to prevent clashing of noncongress candidates in some regions, notably in Bombay and Bengal. As a party it was stillborn, being killed by the mutual suspicions between those in and those outside the Congress.

The responsivists and independent-congress men represent the new dominant trend of bourgeois nationalist policy and, therefore, are gaining in strength. Their organisation, however, has a firm hold only in the Mahratta provinces. Both of the parties, and particularly the Independent Congress Party, are strongly prohindu, and in

fact, if not in profession, stand for the special interests of hindus as against mohammedans. They agree with the swarajists except on the one point that they believe the national cause should be pushed by using the reforms to the full, including the acceptance of the office. Naturally the swarajists brand them as job-hunters and liberals, and in return they retort that the swarajist policy is bluff and make-believe and that the swarajists are really liberals themselves. Mr Jayakar, the leader of the responsivists, says: "The swarajists practise nothing but responsive cooperation, but refuse to call it by that name."

In spite of being weakened by successive splits and defections, the Swaraj Party still includes the bulk of the rank and file of active nationalists. Its leaders, against their own desires, have refrained from advocating a change of policy in the hope of getting a majority in the elections. The electoral arrangements, however, between the liberals and responsivists, and between the responsivists and independent-congress candidates, have in many places prevented triangular contests, and left the elections to be fought on the clear issue of cooperation or noncooperation. In such cases, since the bulk of the electorate consists of landlord and capitalist elements, there are bound to be many defeats suffered by the swarajists, and their hope of a majority in the councils is rendered vain.

The great asset in their favour is their possession of the congress machinery, and it is freely charged against them that they have used funds collected for the Congress for their own election purposes. The latest election results appear to show that in no case can the swarajists secure an absolute majority, that in general they have lost ground, but that they have increased their representation in some places, such as Madras, where the formerly dominant moderates have been discredited through their past actions.

THE NATIONAL CONGRESS

Whatever the result of the elections, the coming session of the National Congress at Gauhati, in Assam, at the end of the year will witness a determined effort on the part of

the right wing to commit the Congress to a policy of liberalism under the guise of uniting all wings of the nationalist movement. Hints have been thrown out by prominent swarajists that the Swaraj Party is only waiting for the result of the elections to modify its policy. If they do not succeed in obtaining thumping majorities, the swarajist leaders will be ready to accept their defeat as the verdict of the country and adapt their policy accordingly. It will need a bold stand by the rank and file of the party if another Sabarmati pact is to be avoided. The rank and file are opposed to the surrender policy of the leaders, for they are closer to the masses and themselves also have nothing to gain by the alliance with British imperialism, but they are disunited, confused by communal and other side issues and easily deceived by the pseudorevolutionary phraseology used by the bourgeois leaders.

Nevertheless there is no way forward unless they come out into the open with a program of their own based on the class needs of the masses. The left wing can only rally itself around the demand for a free democratic republic. Thus the class issues are getting more defined. After the elections it is expected that the communal issue will cease to occupy such a prominent position, and the class issue become more pronounced. After the big bourgeoisie the middle bourgeoisie also is forsaking the national-revolutionary struggle and finding its ally in the imperialist camp. The workers and peasants will be compelled to fight their own battle and find their own allies. The latter are especially to be found outside India, where other workers and peasants are engaged in the struggle with the same enemy.

Labour Monthly
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VIII. Gauhati Session of the Congress

22. FROM GAYA TO GAUHATI

The meeting of the National Congress at Gauhati will see the end of the predominance of the Swaraj Party. The bankruptcy of the swarajist policy of extravagant talk and petty constitutional parliamentary practice was already evident before the Kanpur congress last year, but it was given a new lease of life in view of the elections that take place this month.

Nevertheless the events of the present year have made a swarajist victory at the polls practically an impossibility. The policy of saying one thing and doing another has failed miserably in every direction. It has failed even to keep the party together. The political history of the last year was accurately characterised by Lord Winterton in the British House of Commons as the history of the progressive disintegration of the Swaraj Party. This disintegration has only followed as a logical consequence of the transformation which the party underwent during the previous two years of its existence. It is the natural punishment for the failure to find a way of combining parliamentary action with the development of a militant mass movement.

At the Kanpur congress, the swarajist leaders by means of a demagogic appeal and a free use of revolutionary

phraseology were able to defeat the advocates of responsive cooperation and to make it appear that their own policy was of an entirely different kind. As a matter of fact, their practical policy was exactly the same as that of the responsivists, and their real aim, viz a compromise with imperialism, was also identical. They did not put forward compromise openly as their slogan, because they knew that it would not appeal to the lower-middleclass rank and file of the Congress, and also because it was in fact contrary to the pledges by which they had gained their leading positions.

Now, however, it has become impossible to hide the fact that the swarajist policy of revolutionary-nationalism, civil disobedience and the rest was only a make-believe. It has become apparent to all that the policy of honourable cooperation is indeed no different from that of responsive cooperation. In view of this, and under the pressure of the steady policy of economic conciliation which has been pursued by British imperialism, a large section of the party has preferred to come out in the open, to sever itself altogether from the potentially revolutionary mass movement and to declare itself amenable to an immediate bargain with imperialism.

The organisation of the dissidents in the Independent Congress Party means the formation of an electoral bloc which will spell disaster to the hopes of the swarajists at the next elections. At the elections three bourgeois-nationalist sections will come forward for the suffrages of the limited body of voters. These will be firstly, the liberals and independents representing, roughly speaking, the big bourgeoisie, secondly the responsivists and independent congressmen representing the new dominant trend in bourgeois-nationalism, and lastly the swarajists, claiming to represent all sections including the lower-middleclass elements. Among these three groups, the first two have in many places concluded a working arrangement, as for instance where the Indian National Party is still in existence, so that to a large extent three-cornered elections will be avoided and the elections will be fought out on the single main issue of whether or not to cooperate with the

British government in working the reforms. Besides the question of cooperation, the only other important issue will be that of communalism and this also will not work in favour of the swarajists.

The bulk of the electorate consists of landlord and capitalist elements, who will, therefore, be disposed to declare for the liberal and responsivist candidates rather than for the swarajists and their inconsistent pseudorevolutionary program. Consequently, in spite of the backing of the congress organisation, the split in the swarajist ranks will render them unable to achieve now the success that they failed to achieve before the split had taken place.

Whatever the results of the elections, even if the Swarajist Party were to emerge victorious, the swaraj policy is likely to meet with defeat. If the swarajists obtain a majority there will be strong pressure upon them to accept office and use their power as far as they can. If, on the other hand, they remain as now in a minority, swarajism is likely to be declared a failure and the way will be open for a surrender to the right wing.

This is the atmosphere in which the session of the National Congress will take place. It can be expected that Gauhati will witness a determined effort on the part of the right wing to assert their control over the Congress. Every effort will be made to commit the Congress to a policy of liberalism under the guise of uniting all sections of the nationalist movement under the congress flag.

It will be remembered that when the ominous Sabar-mati pact was first signed, a prominent responsivist made the illuminating comment that "we have gone a fairly long way to completing the work begun at Gaya". The triumph of constitutional bourgeois-nationalism at Gauhati will mean in very truth the completion of the work begun at Gaya, viz the work of destroying the mass revolutionary-nationalist movement and substituting in its place the petty compromising movement of the selfseeking Indian bourgeoisie.

The policy of make-believe will not be treated so indulgently at Gauhati as it was at Kanpur. It will be openly exposed, sneered at and ridiculed. The new creed of

bourgeois nationalism, i.e. responsive cooperation, will be put forward as an honest commonsense alternative. Honest liberalism will score at the expense of sham radicalism.

The new creed may well find favour with a large proportion of the six million electors. But is the National Congress to be confined to the select few that British imperialism favours with its recognition? What of the three hundred odd millions who are still disenfranchised and considered unfit to have any voice as to how they shall be taxed, ruled or represented? Like a large percentage even of those who are enfranchised they are forced, willy-nilly, into a struggle with the exploiting machine of British imperialism. It is that struggle which is betrayed by the surrender of liberalism, a surrender which cannot be got over by any amount of loose talk of nation and masses.

Liberalism is the creed of sycophancy and mendicancy. The erstwhile extremists, who are now promising to be good boys and who hope so to win the approval of their masters and a further gratuity later on, are ready to forsake the path of mass struggle both in principle and practice.

Gauhati will see the climax of this surrender but it should see also the unmistakable beginnings of a new movement. The compromisers will unflinchingly seize control unless the left wing can put up a united struggle against them. As long as the left wing fears to speak out openly or is content to mutter the outworn slogans and empty phrases of a dead movement it will achieve nothing. The opposition to compromise cannot be negative, it must be expressed in the concrete terms of a clear alternative policy.

There is only one possible basis on which the left wing can rally all its elements, win the confidence of the masses and defeat the betrayal of the liberals. That basis is the acceptance of the principles of a mass nationalist movement. The lessons to be learnt from the Chinese revolution should not pass unheeded. The Kuomintang has been successful in uniting all revolutionary nationalists in the struggle against foreign imperialism. The same thing can be done by the Indian nationalist movement.

The essential principles for a program which will bring about this result are not more than half a dozen in number. The first principle of the national movement cannot be less than national independence—the struggle for a free democratic republic. The following points in the program are inseparably bound up with the struggle for a democratic republic. These points are, (1) universal suffrage, (2) universal compulsory education, (3) nationalisation of industries, (4) satisfaction of the immediate demands of labour, and (5) agrarian revolution.

This program represents the minimum which must be adopted by any successful militant mass movement. The national movement is meaningless if the goal is not national freedom, national freedom is meaningless if it does not bring democracy, education and rights for the workers and peasants. The industrial workers, sweated and oppressed though they are, represent a potential force the magnitude of which can only be apprehended by a study of the history of the working class in the rest of the world, and especially in Russia. The leftwing nationalist movement should in all sincerity and earnestness ally itself with the struggle of the workers for the organisation of industrial labour, for the establishment of full rights for trade-unionism, for the eight-hour day, minimum wage, workers' compensation, adequate factory legislation and other needs for a healthy and vigorous labour movement. It will not be long then before the industrial workers, in full realisation of the fact that they are not the tools of a movement which is merely exploiting them for its own ends, will become the foremost fighters in the nationalist ranks. With regard to the peasants also, their incalculably enormous potential strength cannot be exerted in the national movement unless the latter discards the futilities of the so-called constructive program and boldly champions the real grievances of land famine and of oppression by landlords and moneylenders, from which the peasants are suffering today.

At present the program of the official leadership of the Congress is discredited, the left wing stands disorganised and the masses are waiting for a lead. There has never

been a better opportunity for setting the nationalist movement on a new path. It is for the sincere fighters in the nationalist movement to see that the opportunity is not missed and that preparations are begun well in time to ensure that Gauhati will witness the inception of a new phase in the nationalist struggle.

The Masses of India

Vol II, No 11, November 1926

23. A MANIFESTO TO THE ALL-INDIA NATIONAL CONGRESS

On the eve of the annual meeting of the Indian National Congress, the nationalist movement presents a picture which is apparently very discouraging. What a change compared with the situation that prevailed in 1920-21 when the people were enthusiastically gathered around the National Congress eagerly looking up to it for a courageous lead in the fight for freedom!

Today the National Congress exists but in name, a number of conflicting political groups contending for the possession of its prostrate frame. Nationalism—the courageous fight for real freedom—is drowned in the surging sea of communalism. Bickering over petty formalities is the outstanding feature of political life of the country. More than half a dozen political constellations are vilifying each other. Each claims to represent the nation. But none of them touch the vital issues before the nation, their sole object being to secure a majority in the legislatures.

Even those who recognise the impotence of these pseudoparliamentary bodies are nevertheless frantically trying to enter them. They have forgotten that the road to freedom does not lie through the blind alley of those impotent and unrepresentative legislative bodies. They have for-

gotten that in the fight for national freedom these at best can only serve as auxiliaries to other more powerful and effective weapons.

THE LEGISLATURES DO NOT REPRESENT THE PEOPLE

The present legislative bodies, to capture which has become the beginning and end of the program of nationalist parties, are impotent. They are impotent because they do not represent the people. Being unrepresentative, they cannot act as the vehicle through which popular energy can find adequate expression. The experience of the last two years should have made this abundantly clear. The Swaraj Party entered the councils ostensibly with the object of wrecking them. What actually happened, however, was the wreck of the Swaraj Party on the treacherous ground of pseudoparliamentarism.

Although the situation is as clear as daylight, it may be useful to give a few facts showing the unrepresentative character of the legislative bodies established by the reforms of 1919. It is necessary to repeat this axiomatic truth because of the lamentable parliamentary degeneration of the entire nationalist movement.

The total population of British India (excluding Burma) is 221,500,000 in round numbers. Of these a little less than 5,000,000 are qualified voters according to the findings of the Southborough (franchise) committee. That is to say, about 2.2 per cent of the entire nation is enfranchised by the reforms! The councils at best, therefore, represent this small minority. The overwhelming majority of 97.8 per cent, being unenfranchised, cannot make themselves heard or felt through these bodies.

Is not the nationalist movement reared on a very narrow social foundation when its program and policies are largely concerned with entrance into and action within these legislative bodies? Can the nationalist parties which stake their very existence on capturing a sufficient number of seats in these councils be expected to shake the power of imperialism? Still, these unrepresentative legislative bodies have become the centre of nationalist politics. Consequent-

ly, the nationalist movement as represented by the existing political parties is divorced from the popular masses. It has neither the power nor the will to fight for freedom. The general desire is to reach a compromise with imperialism without losing face. Mutual recriminations and loud protestations of patriotism do not change the essentials of the situation.

NO FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCES AMONG THE NATIONALIST PARTIES

Nationalist criticism of the councils seldom concerns their unrepresentative character. Neither the National Congress nor any particular party inside or outside it has ever conducted a campaign for the extension of the franchise. The National Congress in the beginning boycotted the reformed councils not as a protest against their unrepresentative character, but owing to the limited power conferred on them. The general nationalist demand is that the government should be responsible to the legislatures representing 2.2 per cent of the population. This would be considered selfgovernment! Political domination and economic exploitation of the people by British imperialism would obviously be considered tolerable and permissible provided that they are carried on with the sanction of the legislature representing the enfranchised few of the native upper and middle classes.

The year 1925 was marked by a complete decomposition of the nationalist movement. The National Congress was split up into warring factions. But there is little fundamental difference between these parties. They all subscribe to the program of selfgovernment within the British empire. Even their immediate demands are identical.

The bitter controversy between the orthodox swarajist leaders and dissidents (responsivists and independents) confused the situation. The rank-and-file members and adherents of the Swaraj Party failed to see the sham character of their fight over formalities. Ostensibly, the difference was only on one point—on what condition the

nationalists should accept office. On principle, however, there was no objection to accepting office under the present constitution, which only three years ago was boycotted.

During his negotiations with Malaviya, Motilal Nehru stated on 15 September that "the general principle and policy laid down in the resolution of the Kanpur congress shall be adhered to". But two days later, after the negotiations had broken up, the central organ of the Swaraj Party wrote editorially:

"The result of the elections would go a great way to show if the country wanted a change of policy formulated by the Kanpur congress...The Swaraj Party would also approach the Congress to formulate a new policy, if necessary, in the light of the mandate of the country" (*Forward* 17 September).

Where is the fundamental difference between the two parties then? Both are ready to change principles and policies at the behest of the electorate representing 2.2 per cent of the population. Both are prepared to override the interest of the unfranchised masses in favour of an infinitesimal minority. The independents stated the new "principle and policy" of agreement with imperialism before the election; whereas the swarajists wanted only to temporise. At the moment of writing, the results of the election are not fully known. But it is a foregone conclusion that the swarajists will lose ground. Nowhere will they have an independent majority to carry on their old tactics. So they will approach the Gauhati congress to revise the decisions of the Kanpur congress. The endeavour will be made to trick the National Congress into sanctioning a policy of compromise dictated by the interests of the upper- and middle-class minority.

The authority of the National Congress will be asserted, it will regain its position as the supreme organ of the Indian people, only if at Gauhati the tricky politics of the bourgeois leaders are frustrated. This can be done by mobilising the rank and file on a platform of revolutionary-nationalism.

CONTRADICTIONS INSIDE THE SWARAJ PARTY

One by one the consciously bourgeois elements have gone out of the Swaraj Party. But unfortunately the leadership of the party still remains predominantly bourgeois. The left-opposition which saved the party by repudiating the treacherous Sabarmati pact, and which made itself felt in Bengal, is still incapable of and unwilling to revolt openly against the bourgeois leaders. But the Swaraj Party will not be able to become a party of the people, leader of the fight for national freedom, until and unless it breaks away completely from the bourgeoisie seeking compromise with imperialism.

The weakness of the Swaraj Party has always been the contradiction between the leadership and the ranks. The program and policy of the party have always been dictated by the interests of the capitalist and landowning classes; but the members and adherents of the party largely hail from other sections of society. The party has always defended aristocratic and bourgeois interests while making some meaningless gestures to hoodwink its revolutionary following. But in course of time even these meaningless gestures became somewhat harmful to the agreement between British imperialism and the native upper classes. The Swaraj Party stood at the parting of ways. It must completely betray its petty-bourgeois followers or forfeit the votes of the upper and middle classes. The latter eventuality would be fatal for a party which had staked its existence on the success of a parliamentary policy.

Serving as a connecting link with the people, the petty bourgeoisie give the Swaraj Party a national significance. But most of them cannot give it the vote. Connection with the popular masses would be vital for the party that wants to lead a revolutionary fight. For a party depending exclusively on parliamentary action, however, the electorate is more important than the nation. The class composition of the present electorate demands that any party seeking its vote must be committed to defending capitalist and landowning interests. Should these interests

conflict with those of the nation, the latter must be betrayed.

This was the vital issue in the controversy that raged in the period immediately preceding the elections. The bourgeois leaders who still remained at the head of the Swaraj Party were called upon to speak clearly on this point: Would they throw overboard their trusting lower-middleclass following, betray the people and stand openly as the spokesmen of the capitalist and landowning classes? They evaded a straight answer. By means of sophistry and hair-splitting over formalities, they deceived the party. Actually, however, they have betrayed the party and the nation. Their insistence upon staking the future of the party on the verdict of the electorate is a violation of the sovereignty of the people. They would make not only the Swaraj Party, but the National Congress, an instrument to be used in the interests of the small minority—enfranchised by the grace of Britain.

THE PROGRAM MUST BE CHANGED

The Swaraj Party cannot rescue itself from the deadening grip of bourgeois influence unless it adopts a new program. A new program reflecting the interests of the people and providing for militant mass action for the realisation of national freedom will put the leaders to the test. They must either accept that program and thereby burn the bridge over which they want surreptitiously to sneak over to the camp of the bourgeoisie with the party in their pocket, or leave the party, following the example of their spiritual comrades who have preceded them.

The program of the Swaraj Party is essentially a program of bourgeois-nationalism. Literally, it is ambiguous. For example, while formulating its broad principles at Gaya. C. R. Das said:

"Swaraj is indefinable, and it is not to be confused with any particular system of government. Swaraj is the natural expression of the national mind, and must necessarily cover the whole history of the nation."

This statement ought to be laughed at, were it not so

tendentious. Das could not have been able to carry the best elements in the nationalist movement with him had he at that critical period defined swaraj, which was enunciated as an undefinable metaphysical category at Gaya, in the course of two years and a half assumed a very definite material form—a particular system of government. At Faridpur, the swarajist leader defined swaraj as dominion status within the British empire. The party, intellectually paralysed by the cult of hero worship, could not even ask the leader how such a modest place on the outskirts of the British empire would be "the natural expression of the national mind covering the whole history of the nation".

Dominion status is not an expression of the national mind. It corresponds with the interests of the nationalist bourgeoisie. Here is what C. R. Das has had to say in favour of dominion status: (1) it brings material advantage, (2) it affords complete protection; and (3) it provides all the elements of swaraj (Faridpur speech).

Dominion status will bring material advantage to whom? To the Indian bourgeoisie. An agreement with imperialism will assure the development of Indian capitalism. Protection is needed by those who have something to protect. They again are the capitalist and landowning classes who are afraid that national revolution involving the worker and peasant masses might encroach upon their preserves. The classes of Indian society that live and thrive by exploiting the toiling masses and to whom national freedom means the freedom to increase this exploitation, want the protection of British imperialism against the possible revolt of the people. This is the meaning of dominion status. Material advantages for the Indian bourgeoisie and protection of the rights and privileges of exploiting classes—these are the principal elements of the swaraj, which the founder of the Swaraj Party desired to see established.

So long as the Swaraj Party stands by the program outlined at Gaya and expounded in detail at Faridpur by its founder, it cannot claim to be essentially different from the other nationalist parties. It must go the same way as that

pursued by other parties committed to the defence of the upper classes. Even dominion status is a far cry. It won't be granted by imperialism just for the asking. There must be a long period of apprenticeship, which must be served by cooperating with imperialism on the basis of the reforms. The nationalist bourgeoisie are anxious to serve this apprenticeship to qualify for a further instalment of concessions—economic and political.

This is the situation in which the Congress meets at Gauhati. It must choose between the enfranchised 2.2 per cent and the unfranchised, oppressed and exploited 97.8 per cent of the nation. The hypocritical policy of shouting "swaraj for the 98 per cent" and doing the bidding of the 2 per cent cannot be carried on any longer without ruining the nationalist movement, without prostituting the name and prestige of the National Congress.

The opinion of the *Forward* quoted above, and more than one pronouncement of the swarajist leaders in a similar strain, do not leave any doubt about the policy that will be pressed upon the Congress as soon as the results of the election are known. In the very unlikely event of the swarajists increasing their forces in the councils or even retaining their present strength, they will accept office. The fiasco of the last two years cannot be repeated all over again. In the much more likely eventuality of their defeat in the polls, they will, of course, change their policy and try to secure the sanction of the Congress for this bankrupt policy of surrender and compromise.

The National Congress can save itself only in one way.

It is roundly repudiating the program and policy that seek to make it an instrument of parties betraying national interests for the sake of a small minority. The repudiation of the bankrupt policy of bourgeois nationalism should be followed by the adoption of a program of democratic national freedom. Pseudoparliamentarism should be replaced by militant mass action. The policy of surrender and compromise should be discarded in favour of a policy of courageous and genuine fight with imperialism. The National Congress should be liberated from the treacherous

bourgeois leadership and brought under the inspiring influence of a republican people's party.

COMMUNAL CONFLICTS

Many must have been discouraged by the communal conflicts that have been devastating the country during the last years. It is certainly a discouraging phenomenon. But here again a party of the people will find the solution. While the upper classes fight for rights and privileges, the masses of both the communities have one very vital thing in common. It is exploitation. Hindu and muslim workers are sweated in the same factory. Hindu and muslim peasants toil on the land side by side to be equally robbed by the landlord, the moneylender and the agents of imperialism. The muslim worker is not better paid when the employer is his coreligionist. Nor does a hindu landlord take less rent from a hindu than from a muslim tenant.

The same rule largely applies to the exploited middle classes (petty intellectuals, small traders, artisans, etc.). United by the common tie of exploitation 98 per cent of the entire people have no reason to be involved in the communal conflicts. Help them to be conscious of their economic interests, give them a courageous lead to fight against their common enemy, the forces of exploitation, and the bottom will be knocked out of the insidious policy of provoking communal conflict. It is true this cannot be done overnight. But there is no other remedy for the cancer of communalism which eats into the vitals of the nationalist movement.

The collapse of the nationalist movement has given an impetus to the communal conflict. Reorganisation of the nationalist movement with a program of militant mass action will remove this impetus. Noncooperation and the khilafat agitation quickened religious fanaticism at the expense of political consciousness. This grave error must be rectified by placing the nationalist movement on a solid secular basis. The masses should be mobilised under the banner of nationalism with slogans of immediate economic demands. Land-tenure, land rent, usurers' charges, prices,

wages, working conditions, primary education—these should be the main topics of agitation. On every one of these points, vitally concerning the life of the people, the identity of interest can be made clear very easily. Agitation along these lines, therefore, will provide for the safest guarantee against communal tension, while building up a solid basis for the nationalist movement.

Democratic principles, however, do not operate against the interests of national minorities. The mutual distrust between the hindus and muslims in India has a historical background. The communal question, therefore, should be approached as the question of a national minority. One of the main planks in the nationalist platform must be the protection for national and communal minorities. If the nationalist movement fails to guarantee this protection imperialism gets the chance of offering it and thus drives a wedge straight through the nation.

The behaviour and pronouncements of more than one prominent hindu nationalist leader gives the muslims sufficient reason for suspicion. The extraterritorial patriotism of a section of the muslim leaders, on the other hand, gives a handle to the injurious propaganda of the hindu reactionaries. Excesses on both sides should be avoided. The surest guarantee against communalism is the mobilisation of the masses on the basis of their economic interests. Class lines cut deeply across the superficial and often artificially drawn communal lines.

NATIONAL INTEREST AND CLASS INTEREST

The recrudescence of communal conflicts has been very harmful to the nationalist movement; but the present decomposition of the movement is caused primarily by the conflict of class interests inside the nationalist ranks. Indian society is as much divided into classes as capitalist society in any other country.

The relation of British imperialism with the different classes of Indian society is not uniform. The nation is oppressed and exploited by a foreign power. But the pressure

of this oppression does not fall equally on all the strata of the Indian population. The object of exploitation is not the entire people, but only the classes that produce wealth by their labour-power. These are the workers and peasants constituting over 90 per cent of the nation. The quarrel between imperialism and the upper classes of Indian society is a quarrel over the booty. Native landlords and capitalists also live at the expense of the producing masses. But the monopolist policy of imperialism did not permit them an unrestricted economic development which would increase their capacity to exploit the working class. The major portion of the values produced by the Indian workers and peasants go to swell the pockets of imperialism. The Indian bourgeoisie were allowed only a modest middleman's share. In course of time they have become dissatisfied with this small portion of the booty. They wanted an ever-increasing share and finally the prior right over the entire resources of labour-power of the Indian masses.

The Indian bourgeoisie, however, could not realise their aspirations for the mastery of the country without challenging the monopoly of imperialism. This again they cannot do by themselves. India cannot become free from foreign domination except through the revolutionary action of the entire people. But the popular revolt against imperialism is not caused by the grievances of the nationalist bourgeoisie. It has its own causes. The popular masses rise against exploitation as such. Consequently, the nationalist bourgeoisie, who would like to be the sole masters and rulers of the country, do not dare to use the weapon which alone can seriously threaten the imperialist hold on the country. National interests—the interests of the 98 per cent—are thus sacrificed for class interests. The attempt to conquer sole mastery over the country being fraught with possible danger of immense gravity, the nationalist bourgeoisie enter into an agreement with imperialism to exploit the Indian people jointly.

Why does imperialism enter into such an agreement? There are several reasons. Firstly, the general crisis of capitalism has weakened the basis of imperialism so much that the policy of the old classical colonialism must be re-

vised. Secondly, the Indian market is attacked by Japan, USA, Germany, etc.; only goods manufactured in India with cheap labour can compete with these intruders. Therefore Britain adopts the policy of industrialising India under the domination of imperialist finance. Thirdly, the decline of the accumulation of capital in Britain does not permit her to spare sufficient capital to carry on the program of industrialising India. She must draw Indian capital into operation. Fourthly, the mass character of the postwar nationalist movement forces imperialism to win over to its side ever-wider strata of the native society.

A foreign power cannot rule a country for a long time unless supported by a certain native element. A government to be stable must have a social basis. Up to the world war, two social factors supported the British government in India. They were the landowning class and the peasantry. These two together constitute a majority of the population. So imperialism had a sure social base. But these two social forces did not support the British government in the same way. The landowning class gave positive, conscious support, while the peasantry provided an unconscious support, by virtue of its passive loyalty. Since the war, the situation has changed. The passive loyalty of the peasant masses has been disturbed. It has been replaced by a state of seething revolt which breaks out from time to time; consequently, the basis of imperialism is now seriously shaken. A new ally must be found to reinforce it.

The new ally is the nationalist bourgeoisie (bankers, merchants, manufacturers, high officials and the professional people closely connected with these classes). In the years following the war, the nationalist movement was heading towards revolution. The ominous prospects were dreaded by a nationalist bourgeoisie. They decided to travel the safer way, and accept the junior partnership with imperialism in the exploitation of the Indian people.

The defection of the bourgeoisie left its mark on the nationalist movement. Compromise and surrender became the policy. This sacrifice of the people on the altar of class interest has been carried on by stages ever since 1922. The last stage will be when the new legislative assembly and

council meet. It does not matter what form it will take. There may still be staged the farce of his majesty's opposition. But, essentially, the parties representing the bourgeoisie will give up all real resistance to imperialism and cooperate—either "honourably" or "responsively"—with the British government.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

The reconciliation of the antagonism between imperialism and the native bourgeoisie, however, does not remove the basic cause of a national revolution. The necessity of freedom for the Indian people is not determined by the sectional interests of the nationalist bourgeoisie. The agreement between imperialism and the native bourgeoisie does not free the Indian people from political domination and economic exploitation. Nearly 98 per cent of the population still remains without any political rights. Economic concessions to native capitalism are not and will not be made by reducing the share of imperialism. The latter will increase the exploitation of the labouring masses who will be forced to produce value for native capitalism over and above what they produce for imperialism. This being the case, the fight for national freedom must be continued. The nationalist movement must be a movement of the masses with a program reflecting the interests of the majority of the people. The program of the movement must be free from all haziness and ambiguity, such as has been the case with the swarajist program.

Particularly clear should be the position of the nationalist movement on the agrarian question. The peasantry constitute over 70 per cent of the population. It is the most important economic factor in the present state of Indian society. It will play a decisive role in the movement for national liberation. The fight for the peasantry should be one of the main tasks of the nationalist movement. Imperialism is endeavouring skilfully to regain the confidence of the peasantry. During the last years, it has forced upon the landowning class tenancy reform laws in several provinces. This has enabled it to take in hand the alarming situation

created by the acute agrarian disturbances in 1919-21. The next step in the attempt to regain the confidence of the peasantry is the royal commission on agriculture. Needless to say that the motive behind all these moves is not to help the peasantry, but to deceive them. Brutal exploitation of the peasant masses is the main source of imperialist profit from India. To frustrate the sinister designs of imperialism to regain the confidence of the peasantry, the nationalist movement must adopt a radical agrarian program and expose the motive of the so-called reform measures passed or proposed by the government.

The following occurred in the manifesto issued by the Swaraj Party on the eve of the 1923 elections:

"It is true that the party stands for justice to the tenant, but poor indeed will be the quality of that justice if it involves any injustice to the landlord."

If the nationalist movement wants to secure active support of the peasant masses, it must liberate itself from the reactionary point of view expressed in this quotation. Such a program is necessary for a party fishing for the vote of the landed gentry; but it is positively harmful for a party that proposes to lead the popular masses in the fight for freedom. If you are so careful as not to touch the privileged position of the landowners, you can only do injustice to the peasantry. The landowning class is a social parasite that sucks the blood of the peasantry. Then, over nearly half the country, the government is the landlord. The maxim of justice should also apply there.

Thus the swarajist program about the peasantry not only protects the parasitic landowners: it gives British imperialism an unlimited lease of life. The agrarian program of the nationalist movement must be to defend the interests of the peasantry. It should be directed ruthlessly against all the agencies, foreign and native, that exploit the peasantry.

THE PROGRAM OF THE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

The movement for national freedom can be led to victory only by a party of the people. Unless it is led by a party which acts according to a clearly-defined program;

the nationalist movement will be floundering like a rudderless ship. It is remarkable that for years the leaders did not tell the country what exactly was the object of the nationalist movement. Swaraj was defined as everything but what it is—national independence. The nationalist movement loses all meaning if its object is not to secure national freedom. National freedom—it is a very clear expression. It does not require any legal or constitutional commentary. It means freedom for the people to establish its own government—to manage its own affairs, political, economic, cultural and so forth. Up till now this fundamental point of the nationalist program has not been clearly and squarely placed before the country. This must be done as the first act in reorganising the nationalist movement. Let not the controversy over the conditions under which nationalists should accept office confuse the main issue. All the existing nationalist parties today are committed to the program of dominion status. Even that much is not demanded immediately. Some measure of responsibility to the present unrepresentative legislature would placate the most radical element. This is no struggle for national freedom. It is mockery. It is a downright betrayal of the nation.

The people must have freedom, complete and unconditional. There must be a people's party to demand and fight for this freedom.

Then, national freedom is not a thing in itself. National freedom would not be worth having and fighting for if it did not bring the people political and economic rights that they are deprived of under the present conditions. The concrete form of national freedom will be the establishment of a *republican state* based on advanced democratic principles.

A national assembly elected by universal adult (man and woman) suffrage will be the supreme organ of the people. All caste and class privileges will be abolished. The country will be thoroughly democratised.

To the masses, national freedom must offer more concrete advantages. It must remove their immediate economic grievances and guarantee them a higher standard of life. National freedom must establish the principle: *The*

land belongs to the tiller. Parasitic classes living in luxury on unearned incomes from land will be deprived of their vested interest. The enormous sums that swell the pockets of landowning class will go to relieve the burden on the peasantry. Land rent will be reduced all round. Poor peasants, eking out a miserable existence on uneconomic holdings will be entirely exempt from rent. The peasantry will be protected against the excesses of the moneylenders. The national government will help the peasantry by means of extensive agrarian credits. The cultural level of the peasantry will be raised through the introduction of machinery in agriculture and through free primary education.

The national government will guarantee the industrial workers *an eight-hour day and minimum living wage.* There will be legislation as regards decent working conditions and housing. Unemployed workers will be taken care of by the state.

Public utilities such as railways, waterways, telegraphs etc. will be the property of the nation. They will be operated not for private profit, but for the use of the public.

Workers (also peasants) will have full freedom to combine, and the right to strike to defend their interests.

There will be complete freedom of religion and worship. National and communal minorities will enjoy the right of autonomy.

These are the main points of the program which will unite the overwhelming majority of the people and set them in irresistible action. The program of bourgeois-nationalism (defence of the interests of the capitalist and landowning classes) has betrayed the nation. The nation must assert itself and move towards freedom in spite of the treachery and timidity of the bourgeoisie. The National Congress must be liberated from the influence of hypocritical bourgeois politicians. Those willing to fight honestly and courageously for freedom must become the spokesmen of the people. The party that wishes to lead the struggle for national liberation must become the party of the people, representing not the fortunate few of the electorate, but the unfranchised majority. Council chambers present

too restricted a field of operation for the party of the people, which must find much wider spheres of action.

National independence and complete democratisation of national life in every respect—these are the main planks of the nationalist platform. The battle to realise this program must be fought with the slogan: "*Land, Bread and Education.*"

1 December 1926

THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA

Meerut Record

Prosecution Exhibit 85

24. END OF "SWARAJISM"

Writing a week before the National Congress assembles we can reasonably state that the politics inaugurated four years ago at Gaya will be abandoned at Gauhati. The Gauhati congress will mark the end of swarajism. Significantly enough the Swaraj Party proposes to change its name just at this juncture. It is not a formality as the leaders might argue. The fact of the matter is, after a short life of four years, the Swaraj Party has decided to commit political suicide. This is the inevitable result of the contradictions and confusions of its own creation.

The Congress Party (new name for the bankrupt Swaraj Party) will not be the same—neither in form nor in essence. With this nondescript name it will be more convenient to break away from the traditions of swarajist politics. The National Congress formally represents the entire nation. In reality, however, ever since its inauguration, it provided the platform from which interests and demands of the capitalist and landowning classes were put forward. The revolutionary storm in the postwar years threatened to tear it off from its upperclass basis and make

it the people's forum. The first reaction to that revolutionary trend was the organisation of the Swaraj Party. Right at the inauguration of the Swaraj Party we warned that abandoning the path of revolutionary mass action the National Congress would be bound for eventual reversion to liberalism. History has proved the correctness of that warning.

Why does the Swaraj Party propose to change its name? This name has a tradition. It is precisely this tradition of resistance that the party must break away from before liberalism can regain supremacy in the National Congress. It is known that all the pronouncedly bourgeois-nationalist parties, except the outspoken loyalists, have very little objection to the essentials of the swarajist program. They are only against the policy of obstruction. Once this little obstacle is removed, there remains no difficulty for a happy family union under the banner of the National Congress. The so-called Congress Party freed from the tradition of obstruction, ready for "honourable cooperation", willing to assume the "responsibility of office", will provide room for all—responsivists, independents, congressists and swarajists. On its platform will stand arm in arm Kelkar, Jayakar, Malaviya, Lajpat and Nehru—all singing the hymn of unity. This will, however, not be a united front in the fight for national liberation. It will be a counterrevolutionary bloc with imperialism to fight the danger of revolution. In this party of "national union" there will be no place for the nation.

That such will be the outcome of the Gauhati congress has been conditioned by the events during the last twelve months and guaranteed by the results of the election. It is notorious that the bombastic policy of "uniform, continuous and consistent obstruction", with which the swarajist leaders caught the imagination of the restive middleclass nationalists, was never put into practice. The first act of the swarajists on entering the legislature was to dilute that policy. In practice, the swarajists steadily moved further and further away from the policy of

obstruction which they professed and closer and closer to cooperation which they condemned. This process of metamorphosis of the swarajist politics must reach the climax. A party cannot always live upon a policy which was never intended to be put into practice and which cannot be applied without a revolutionary orientation. The crisis set in already before the Kanpur congress. The demagoguery of the leaders, aided by the blind faith and political immaturity on the part of the followers, contributed to the prolongation of the process of decomposition and disintegration.

Now the results of the election provide the leaders with the much needed pretext to foist upon the party a line that they have always had in view. The Swaraj Party staked its political existence on electoral success. A defeat at the polls, therefore, is catastrophic. With the exception of Madras, and possibly of Bengal, in no other province can the swarajists muster a majority. In most of the provinces they are in a hopeless minority. National politics is the business of the legislative assembly. There the swarajists have lost much ground. In short, they are not in a position to play an independent political role. There is not even the possibility of making a coalition with centrist groups under swarajist predominance as in the last assembly. The responsivists and the independent-congressists together will control a working majority. The swarajist minority will thus be out of the parliamentary picture unless they agree to join the bourgeois bloc.

Under this circumstance the swarajist leaders have the situation just as they want. They are not in a worse predicament than they would be in the case of victory at the polls. The tactics of "uniform, continuous and consistent" obstruction were never put into practice on the plea that the swarajists did not have the necessary majority. Should the swarajists have the majority and apply the much advertised tactics, what would happen? We have had a little taste of that in the Central Provinces and partially in Bengal. British imperialism would not abdicate as a re-

sult of an adverse vote in the dummy, unrepresentative parliament. The parliamentary deadlock must be one of the numerous forms of anti-imperialist fight if it is to have any influence upon the situation. Otherwise, even with a majority, the swarajists would present us with the laughable spectacle of "walking out" and "walking in". Experience has shown that the leaders of the Swaraj Party are incapable and unwilling to carry on a mass struggle against imperialism. They would be reconciled to British predominance over the political and economic life of the country, if a few grievances of theirs were removed. In the eventuality of their possessing a parliamentary majority it would be rather difficult to make peace with the bureaucracy in return for a few concessions to native capitalism and officialdom. The middleclass following would not understand such action and demand a more energetic fight. The result, therefore, would be the same—decomposition and disintegration of the party owing to the class contradiction between the leadership and the following. The present defeat is disastrous for the party; but a parliamentary majority would be equally so.

What is disastrous for the party as an organ of struggle against imperialism is an advantage for the leaders. The defeat provides the leaders with the pretext to purge the party of such features as are disliked by the bourgeoisie. The president-elect of the Gauhati congress (who is also the deputy leader of the Swaraj Party) has already indicated which way the wind blows. He has announced that the Swaraj Party was not against accepting office on principle. By this tentative announcement he has given the lead to the political line to be pursued at Gauhati. Further, it has been repeatedly declared by the swarajist leaders and the swarajist press that the party would change its policy if the verdict of the electorate demanded such a change. Now the leaders will read that verdict in the election result and propose the formal scrapping of the swarajist program. We say formal, because practically the swarajist program of obstruction was abandoned

already in the lifetime of the last legislature. This formality performed, there remains no difference between the Swaraj Party and the other bourgeois parties. There is no obstacle to their fusion in one party. And by the proposition to change its name to Congress Party the Swaraj Party prepares for this fusion.

Thus the net result of the Gauhati congress will be the end of "swarajism" and the formation of a bourgeois-nationalist bloc (eventually to coalesce in a party) on the platform of agreement with British imperialism in consideration for concessions made to native capitalism.

It still remains to be seen how the rank and file of the Congress (particularly the revolutionary element) will react to this situation. If the revolutionary element would follow the lead given in the manifesto of the Communist Party, they could make Gauhati memorable in the history of the Indian nationalist movement. In order to prevent that the National Congress again becomes the political platform of native landlordism and capitalism, they should boldly bid for its leadership. The Congress will be the political expression of the entire Indian people only when it will be dominated by a party of the people. The inevitable reaction to the concerted attempt of the leaders to liquidate the Swaraj Party in favour of an all-inclusive bourgeois bloc will be the endeavour to save the party as a people's bloc. The Swaraj Party can exist and play a big role in the history of India's struggle for freedom even after the collapse of swarajism. As a matter of fact, the Swaraj Party to be a party of the people must get rid of the "swarajism" of its leaders, which represent an attempt to exploit, by means of hypocrisy and demagoguery, the revolutionary sentiment of the middle class in the interests of native capitalism.

In the new year the class differentiation of the nationalist ranks becomes sharper than ever. The promised appointment of the royal commission on reform will quicken the process still more. If the commission were appointed before the expiration of the maximum time limit, it would

be interpreted as a "change of heart" encouraging "responsive" or "honourable" cooperation. At this critical period of India's "constitutional advance" the nationalist bourgeoisie would not tolerate any note of discord from any political group or party depending largely on their vote. So the swarajist leaders must abandon their ambiguous position. They must choose their company. They are going to do this at Gauhati.

Thus the Swaraj Party will be unburdened of the last remnants of the bourgeois ballast. The last vestige of illusion will be dissipated. The line of class interest will be drawn clearly across the national interest. The future of Indian politics will be determined by these facts. The end of "swarajism" is, therefore, a blessing in disguise. It will free the petty-bourgeois revolutionary elements from the domination of feudal and capitalist ideology. It will help them see things in their proper perspectives. It will introduce realism in their political views. And as a result of all these, the petty-bourgeois revolutionary-nationalists will be forced to move towards an alliance with the workers and peasants—the most revolutionary social forces. The corollary to the formation of the bourgeois bloc of agreement with imperialism is the organisation of the revolutionary bloc of the middle class, peasantry and proletariat to carry on the struggle for national freedom as a preliminary to higher forms of freedom.

Recently the tendency to "go to the masses" has been growing among the petty-bourgeois revolutionary-nationalists. Objectively this is a tendency in the right direction. But no progress was made in that direction because of the reactionary subjective factor. The petty-bourgeois intellectuals desired to go to the masses to catch them for the landowning and capitalist classes, so to say. They acted as the instrument of feudal and capitalist domination. The Swaraj Party was the expression of this ideology. The break up of the Swaraj Party will destroy this ideology. The petty-bourgeois intellectuals will come

closer to the masses not as agents of capitalist exploitation and feudal domination, but as a revolutionary factor irresistibly drawn to a mightier revolutionary force.

The lessons of Gauhati will aid the crystallisation of the forces of national liberation in the form of a people's party. The deceived and betrayed rank and file of the Swaraj Party will provide the cadre for the party of the people fighting resolutely for the freedom of the people. Freed from the hypocrisy and demagoguery of bankrupt "swarajism", the revolutionary element of the Swaraj Party will become the vanguard of the struggle for national freedom in its next stage.

The Masses of India
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25. THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

M. N. ROY

The 41st annual session of the Indian National Congress was celebrated during the last days of December. The annual session of the Congress is the most important occasion in the annals of the nationalist movement. Important political decisions are taken there which govern the conduct of the movement during the following twelve months. The character of this year's session is indicated by the following quotation from the presidential address:

"No scheme of selfgovernment will be acceptable which denies full control of the civil service, the military, naval and air forces, and political relations with the Indian states, and which refuses India dominion status upon the same terms as those determined by the imperial conference."

This can be taken as the program of the Indian nationalist movement for the immediate future. The program formulated in these words may be extreme or moderate according to the interpretation that will be put upon them eventually. But in the midst of this ambiguity one thing is very clear, i.e., that the leaders who are very definitely against a revolutionary struggle are being pushed unwillingly towards a more extreme position under the pressure of the rank and file.

In spite of this general left tendency the Congress, as a whole, presented not a very encouraging spectacle. While three years ago as many as thirty thousand delegates attended it, this year the number of delegates dropped to two thousand five hundred. In other words, from a gigantic mass demonstration—the annual session of the National Congress has become a meeting of a certain section of the nationalist movement.

Traditionally and theoretically, the National Congress is not a party organisation; it is called the national parliament. As a matter of fact, since its foundation in 1885, up till the stormy years immediately following the imperialist war, the National Congress represented the political platform of the native bourgeoisie. In the period of 1919-22 the Congress was a gigantic mass organisation focusing the revolutionary will of the entire people to become free from imperialist domination. But even during this revolutionary period the Congress essentially remained under bourgeois leadership. Its political outlook was reformist and its social ideology was decidedly reactionary. Although the conscious representatives of the big bourgeoisie left the Congress, the petty-bourgeois nationalists who led the movement actually represented the bourgeoisie. They tried to use the revolutionary mass movement to further the reformist demands of native capitalism. This contradiction eventually led to the collapse of the movement. The Swaraj Party which during the last two years has captured the National Congress arose out of this collapse of the revolutionary mass movement.

The Swaraj Party itself embodied the two conflicting tendencies inside the nationalist movement. The leadership was reformist while the rank and file inclined towards revolution. The central slogan of the nationalist movement during the acutely revolutionary period of 1919-22 was the refusal to cooperate with the British government in any way. Essentially this was a very revolutionary slogan and in reality it did develop into revolutionary action. The National Congress in 1920 decided to boycott the pseudoparliamentary institutions introduced by the reforms of 1919. That was the central pivot of the noncooperation movement. The Swaraj Party was born in the opposition to the program of boycotting the parliamentary institutions. In other words, the Swaraj Party was born by practically repudiating the program of refusing to cooperate with the British government. It proposed to fight imperialist absolutism through constitutional parliamentary ways. The essence of this program was not an unconditional fight against imperialism but to negotiate with imperialism for the best possible terms of selfgovernment within the British empire. In comparison to this essential reformist nature of the swarajist program, the demand contained in the above quotation from the speech of the president of this year's congress is indeed extreme. When the nationalist movement demands a control of the military forces a compromise with imperialism becomes impossible. It is doubtful whether the president was fully aware of the gravity of his pronouncement. He might have said those words in order to pacify the rank and file which are becoming very dissatisfied with the policy of compromise; but the fact remains that the National Congress has officially committed itself to such an extreme position.

Apart from this, this year's national congress has practically taken no decisions. This undecisive character of it is all the more remarkable because never in its history has the national movement required more urgently and clearly a determined lead. The big bourgeoisie has definitely

gone over to the side of imperialism. The policy of parliamentary opposition advocated by the Swaraj Party has gone bankrupt. The interests of the masses demand a decisive struggle against imperialism. The British rulers are laying clever plans to intensify the exploitation of the Indian masses in conjunction with the native bourgeoisie. Under these circumstances the nationalist movement is faced with two clear alternatives, namely: capitulation to imperialism, or a bold revolutionary fight. The national congress was expected to choose one or the other of these two alternatives. What it did, however, was to adopt the policy of "wait and see". But even this should be considered a victory for the revolutionary forces. The leaders had the intention of forcing upon the Congress their program of compromise with imperialism. Obviously, they have not succeeded in this. Although they have not come out squarely in favour of a revolutionary fight, they have not been able to carry through their program of capitulation. Of course the present bourgeois leaders will never go with the revolutionary forces. As soon as they see that their following is getting out of their control, they will go over to the camp of counterrevolution where they really belong.

The undecisive and ambiguous position taken by this year's congress has been determined by the results of the last election which took place immediately before the congress met. The Swaraj Party was split into not less than four factions by the controversy over the election program. The general demand was for abandoning the tactics of parliamentary obstruction and assuming the responsibility of office. The official swarajist leadership, however, could not agree to this demand. To do so would be tantamount to committing political suicide. The tactics of parliamentary obstruction was the one feature which distinguished the Swaraj Party from the other bourgeois parties. There is no difference in essentially political demands, the common demand being: selfgovernment within the British empire to be attained by stages.

Consequently, the official Swaraj Party contested the elections with the program of nonacceptance of office. This program does not mean anything unless by not accepting office the swarajists can render the formation of a ministry impossible. This implies that the swarajists must have a majority in the legislative bodies in order to carry on their program. The swarajists lost the elections—only in one province they won the majority, and that also of one, of the elected members. This means even in that province a ministry can be formed with the help of the government and nominated members. In other provinces as well as in the central legislative the position is much worse. The swarajists hoped to win the elections but they could not even maintain the position they had in the last parliament. In a number of provincial legislative councils their number has dwindled to half. In the national legislative assembly they have lost considerable ground.

Under these circumstances, the policy of parliamentary obstruction has become entirely untenable. Everywhere the rightwing bourgeois parties and the dissident swarajists are ready to form ministries which could not be opposed successfully. In consequence the swarajists will be practically eliminated from the political picture. In view of this situation the swarajist leaders are naturally eager to change their policy. As a matter of fact, already before the election they had declared that it would be necessary to change the policy if the country so demanded. By "the country" they meant: if the electorate did not approve of the swarajist policy of obstruction. Therefore if the Swaraj Party had a free hand to conduct the nationalist politics at the bidding of the fortunate few enfranchised by the grace of British imperialism, they would have the National Congress declare that the interests of the nation demanded acceptance of office. This they could not do and herein lies the significance of this year's national congress.

The revolutionary potentiality of the nationalist move-

ment becomes still more noticeable when it is remembered that the president of the Congress had himself declared on the eve of the congress that nonacceptance of office could not be a policy applicable under all circumstances. He even secured the assistance of Gandhi for his program of capitulation. For some time, Gandhi had preached the theory that to accept office was the logical conclusion of the swarajist policy of entering the legislative council. He argued that the swarajists could not honestly refuse to participate in the responsibility of administration once they entered the legislative bodies. Obviously, the mood of the congress was threatening. If the leaders had come out with their program of capitulation as they desired, they would have been faced with a rebellious following dangerously beyond their control. It would certainly have been more beneficial for the nationalist movement had the situation been brought to such a climax. In that case, the petty-bourgeois revolutionary forces that constitute the rank and file of the Congress would have been completely liberated from the ideological influence of the bourgeois leaders. The Congress would have become a real fighting organisation. But, as it is, the situation still remains rather unclear.

As in the previous sessions, this year also there was a resolution before the congress to change what is called "the creed". The demand was that the congress should declare complete independence as its goal instead of self-government within the empire. All the leaders spoke against this resolution—Gandhi being one of them. The defeat of the resolution indicates that the revolutionary wing is still not strong enough to assume the leadership of the movement. But the events in the following weeks, which have been predetermined by the election results, will clarify the situation. The policy of nonacceptance of office and parliamentary obstruction, half-heartedly sanctioned by the congress, cannot be maintained. The Swaraj Party must make its position clear. There is little doubt which way the leaders will move; except in one

province, the swarajists will not be asked to form a ministry. In the single province where they had the majority a tacit agreement has already been reached by which the swarajists will support the ministry formed by the nonswarajist nationalists. This method will be adopted everywhere. If not formally, the swarajists will cooperate with the British administration in reality. Attempts will be made to cover this policy of capitulation by radical phraseology, but this will not succeed. The revolutionary following will see through this strategy before long, and what should have been the outcome of this year's congress will be accomplished if not before the next year's congress, certainly then.

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26. THE GAUHATI CONGRESS

The Gauhati session of the National Congress was the most uneventful of recent years. After a year in which the growing bankruptcy of bourgeois-nationalism had been expressed not in mere verbal dissension as an accompaniment of political degeneration, but in actual splits, the formation of new parties and factions, and bewilderment and confusion on all sides, a session of the National Congress has been held which has caused not a ripple in the waters, which has passed away without leaving a trace. The chief characteristics of the congress are all negative; it took no momentous decisions, it settled no vexed questions, it excited no heated debate.

There are two chief reasons for this failure. In the first place, the Congress was no longer 'national' except in a geographical sense, and hardly even in that. The Congress has become the appanage of a single section, it has become practically synonymous with a single comparatively

narrow political party. The Swaraj Party not only dominates the Congress, so much so that it now prefers to call itself the Congress Party, but it dominates to the exclusion of other parties and sections. The session of the Congress was little more than a session of the Swaraj Party. The representatives of the bigger bourgeoisie hold themselves aloof, while the rank and file, the masses of the people, find no place and receive no attention in the party of political intrigue. There was a period half a dozen years ago when the Congress was a real mass organisation, numbering a million or more adherents, when its sessions were mass demonstrations in which thousands of delegates expressed the national will to mass struggle. That time has gone by. The Congress has given up its popular militant policy, it has reverted to its old status of a mouthpiece for a section of the Indian bourgeoisie with a dwindling following of petty-bourgeois elements. The total membership is now only a few thousands, and at the Gauhati session there were hardly two thousand delegates present. It was remarked above that the congress was hardly even national in a geographical sense; it was predominantly a Bengal congress. At least half of the delegates came from Bengal or Bihar. Of the remainder, Madras sent about two hundred, the United Provinces about a hundred and fifty, while no other area of the immense continent of India sent more than a few dozen selected persons. According to the provisional figures published, the Punjab leads the way with sixty delegates, Gujarat has twenty, and a like number comes from the whole of Maharashtra. Ten persons represent the million odd inhabitants of the population of Bombay city, nine that of Delhi. Burma's quota is three. Even if these figures are incomplete, they indicate the exclusive nature of this popular assembly.

The second reason for the indiseive character of the Gauhati congress is to be found in the equilibrium of forces within the comparatively homogeneous representation of congressmen. The rightwing leadership represents the middle bourgeoisie, the leftwing rank and file comes mainly from the petty bourgeoisie. The right wing is

drawn towards compromise by the attraction of the more moderate sections which have already seceded from the Congress, or which, like the responsivist Lajpat Rai, refused to be represented there. The left wing feels the pressure of the masses for whom the bourgeois leadership holds out no hope. The two tendencies were fairly equally balanced at Gauhati. They effectively neutralised one another and consequently the barometer registered 'no change'. The leaders were prevented from making any new capitulation, but on the other hand the left wing did not succeed in securing adoption of any more radical program.

The general feeling, at the time of the election and after, that 'unity' was to be achieved at the Gauhati congress, and the declarations of swarajist leaders in support of this idea, were an indication that the latter were prepared to consider a further step in the path towards reconciliation with British imperialism. Fear of losing what rank-and-file following they still have checked them from pursuing any open measures in this direction. In this negative sense only is there any substance in the claim of the swarajist organ that the congress represents a "swing to the left". Just as formerly the swarajists practised a policy of cooperation while speaking loudly of obstruction, so now they are driven to have recourse to an appeal for "unity in action" (in the legislatures, be it understood), meaning a common policy with the secessionists while proclaiming their difference from them in principle.

This time the theatrical unrealities of the Kanpur congress have been cut out: consequently the congress is described as sober and businesslike. The boasts of preparations for organising civil disobedience have completely disappeared, there is no more talk of spectacular walk-out tactics in the councils. The only pseudoconcession to the left wing is to be found in the humbug of the khaddar resolution. Khaddar is not only to be a substitute for the militant struggle against foreign imperialism, khaddar is not only to be a substitute for raising the economic position of the masses, but it is to be hailed also as the great link between the classes and solvent for class antagonisms.

The presidential speech was that of a liberal carefully kept within the bounds of orthodox swarajist policy by the need of conciliating his revolutionarily inclined following. In his lawyerlike analysis of dyarchy, in his statements on currency policy, local government, communalism and so on he said nothing which would not have come fittingly from a speaker at the Akola conference of the Liberal Federation. Only on the single practical issue of parliamentary obstruction and nonacceptance of office is the swarajist to be distinguished from the moderate. These tenets of the swarajist creed were certainly confirmed at Gauhati but in no very militant spirit. The national demand, as a condition for the inception of "honourable cooperation", has been whittled down to mean practically the release for the Bengal detenus. With this gesture of encouragement, the swarajists would become good liberals ready to accept any instalment of selfgovernment that is offered and respectfully petition for more. It is true that the swarajists put complete selfgovernment as their goal, but so do the liberals. It is true that Srinivasa Iyengar boldly demands control of the army and navy, and in this he emphasises a subject which has generally been delicately ignored by the bourgeois nationalists. But, in the first place, Iyengar's readiness to come to an agreement with imperialism does not depend on the granting of this control, and, in the second place, even as part of the goal of selfgovernment, it is not complete control of Indian foreign relations that he desires. What he declares in his congress speech is:

"Any scheme of selfgovernment will be nothing but an empty form if the control over the army and navy and the control over the political relations with the Indian states, as distinguished from foreign relations with other countries, are not given to our swaraj government."

Iyengar will leave the foreign relations of India with other countries to be decided by British imperialism. If the latter decides in any particular case that those relations mean war, then India under swaraj will be bound to comply, and how then can it be said to have complete control over army and navy? However, the demand, even as

made by the congress president, is an indication that the bourgeois-nationalists are becoming aware that they will have to face the question of the foreign control of the army and navy, and presently it will be realised that on this issue no compromise with imperialism is possible. Short of dictation by a victorious national revolution, British imperialism will no more consent to the withdrawal of the foreign garrison in India than it has in Egypt. The national movement will be compelled to inscribe "control of the army and navy" on its program, but the practical realisation of that slogan can only be brought about under the leadership of a revolutionary party.

A second point of interest in the presidential speech was the attempt to deny that class interests have had any weight in determining the policy of the Swaraj Party or nationalist movement. It was noticeable throughout the congress that the attack of the socialist left wing has at least been sufficiently felt to cause the leaders to feel it necessary repeatedly to deny this charge. Iyengar declared:

"There is perfect identity of feeling and interest between the national movement and labour. None need fear that in India the legitimate interests of labour will be sacrificed to capitalist interests; or that the Congress can neither reconcile them nor be just to both."

And a little later, in speaking of the currency policy, he also announced:

"To say that sections of Indian capitalists want to exploit us is but an attempt to prejudice us which must be resisted."

Iyengar would no doubt like to deny in toto the existence of exploitation of Indian labour by Indian capitalists. His confident assurance, however, will carry very little weight with the masses of Indian factory workers and agricultural wagslaves. Iyengar may be able to bamboozle them for a time with his enunciation that "swaraj is an emotional proposition". In that he is only uttering the same kind of nonsense as Gandhi in the latter's description of swaraj as mystic and undefinable. But he will find it an impossible task to get over the realities of class struggle.

Speeches at the congress were, of course, monopolised by the big guns of the Swaraj Party and the few other national leaders present. Nevertheless it was impossible for them not to allow the ventilation of the rank-and-file demand for the change of the congress creed to "complete independence in place of an undefined swaraj". All the big leaders combined to condemn it, and, of course, Gandhi was put forward to deal the knock-out blow. It is interesting to notice that he began by saying that he would have prevented discussion on this issue as he did when president two years ago. He also put forward his usual plea that the potency of the word swaraj is increased by leaving it undefined, although it is admitted on all hands, and has been declared in explicit terms, that the goal of the swarajists is dominion status as enjoyed by the so-called self-governing dominions. The arguments put forward in favour of this amount in the main to two. Firstly, it is said that the dominions are satisfied with their position and do not want to go out of the empire. Why then should we want to do so? Gandhi made great play with this argument. He said further:

"Take the instance of South Africa. There is that haughty nation, the Dutch Boer. Even they do not bring in such a resolution. General Hertzog has returned from London completely converted. He knows if he wants to declare independence today he can get it."

It would be difficult to conceive of a bigger farrago of sophistry and nonsense than this. In the first place can there be any analogy between the relation to the British empire of the white dominions with their handful of whites as the total population, and the relation to the same centre of the teeming, exploited millions of India? In the second place, where, as in Africa, there is also a large native population then it becomes immediately obvious that selfgovernment and dominion status is an illusion. Africa is indeed a good example. South Africa has dominion status, but what a valuable asset this is to the Africans who form eighty per cent of the population! The Dutch, just as much as the British colonists and money-grubbers are a small section of parasites on the backs of

the African population. They are agreeing, for the time being, to refrain from pressing their private claims in face of the common danger of the rising menace of a revolt on the part of the enslaved population. We in India are not in the position of the Dutch in Africa, but of the Africans in Africa. The only section in India who might be compared to the Dutch in Africa are the big capitalists and landlords, the moderates who have made a bargain for partnership in exploitation with British imperialism. This is exactly what General Hertzog has done. He comes to an agreement with the British for the joint exploitation of the Africans. Dominion status can be nothing less than a partnership in exploitation. This is all very well for the white race in South Africa, but are the masses in India to welcome such a partnership of their bosses with the British.

The second great argument that is advanced against demanding complete independence is that it is trying to bite off too much at once. "One step is now enough for me", says Gandhiji. This is exactly what the liberals say, and we know that it means in practice giving everything and getting nothing at all. Iyengar practically admits that for any form of selfgovernment to be real it must include removal of the foreign garrison and Indian control of army and navy. Every particle of evidence, every example in history, as we have already noted, declares that this is only achievable by a mass revolution. In that case why talk about one step at a time. The bourgeoisie refuse to countenance the demand for independence because they are inspired by a fear of mass revolution, by fear of a mass upheaval which would threaten their own privileges.

The independence resolution was heavily defeated. This defeat was to be expected in view of the composition of the congress, but the ease with which the defeat was accomplished, although the resolution had been passed immediately beforehand by such provincial conferences as those of Andhra and of the Hindustani Central Provinces, exposes the weakness that exists in the leadership of the revolutionary left wing.

The left wing scored no victory again this year. The reason of this is that there is no common program, no

common platform on which they could unite. Besides they are lacking in initiative. While the bourgeois swarajist leaders who were sure of dominating the congress, and who did dominate it, were preparing all their plans and strategy months before the Gauhati session the amorphous left made no preparations for the coming contest. The moderate elements of the left wing are still under the ideological influence of the swarajist leaders, and as long as the latter do not make an open move towards capitulation and ally themselves with their responsivist colleagues with whom they agree in all essentials, they will not revolt against them. The sooner that happens, the better is it for the movement. The more radical elements of them who by the way are for the first time recognised tacitly or openly by the bourgeois leadership did make some effort both inside and outside the congress. Their voice was too feeble to be heard in the open congress where the swarajist might was reinforced by the Mahatma who was attracted there by the lure of khaddar. They tried to score some points in the meetings of the subjects committee, but did not succeed. Their message, however, was given to the country through their spokesman, the president of the political sufferers' conference. But the task of translating that message into a practical program on which the left wing should unite and carry the masses with them, still remains to be accomplished.

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27. THE POLITICAL SUFFERERS' CONFERENCE

The outstanding event at Gauhati is not to be found in the sessions of the National Congress but in the conference of political sufferers or political ex-prisoners. In the

national congress, the machine of the swarajist organisation ponderously pounded its way through on stereotyped lines, with stereotyped routine of phraseology and sentiment without a single new idea or attempt at facing the realities of the situation. The Congress is an outworn form of organisation, representing only a small section of the people, which attempts to cover up its class narrowness and absence of a policy and program on which a broad mass movement can be based by a plentiful use of rhetorical flourishes and religious fervour. The political sufferers' conference met in an entirely different atmosphere. Its tone was largely set by the remarkably frank and courageous speech of the president, Dr Bhupendra-nath Dutta. A lesser man would have succumbed to the temptation to make a sentimental appeal on behalf of those who have suffered at the hands of British imperialism. Dr Dutta, however, refused to utter the expected platitudes. His speech is like a breath of fresh air blowing away the shibboleths of congress oratory and enabling his hearers to see clearly, perhaps for the first time, the realities of Indian social development.

The president was able to achieve what he did by reason of the inestimable advantage of having had first-hand contact with the stupendous social changes in the postwar breakdown of capitalism in Europe. It enabled him to transcend the parochial limitations of the orthodox Indian viewpoint that believes India a country unlike any other in the world, with social foundations, structure and laws of development that have no correspondence with the capitalist countries of the west.

What are the main achievements of the presidential speech? In the first place, it gives a correct analysis of the real significance of the noncooperation movement. The president pointed out that the political sufferers could be divided into two classes, those who have suffered for the cause of revolutionary nationalism and those who have suffered for the noncooperation movement. The former are considered as "political and social untouch-

ables" because they are regarded as the party of violent action as opposed to the party of so-called constitutional method. Yet, as he pointed out, the former group have been ineffective because they were part and parcel of the bourgeoisie and never reached out to the masses. The non-cooperation movement, on the other hand, in their policy of mass organisation, mass upheaval, general strikes and direct action adopted all the characteristics of the tactics of the social-revolutionary parties of the west. They were favoured also by the development of a revolutionary situation such as had long been sighed for by the party of violent action. Thus we have the curious spectacle of a revolutionary movement conducted on revolutionary lines by avowed nonrevolutionaries.

In these circumstances the betrayal by the leaders at Bardoli was only too inevitable and Dr Dutta correctly describes the breakdown and confusion caused by their inability to recognise and refusal to lead the gigantic class struggle which was involved in the noncooperation movement. He goes further and challenges official disapproval by analysing the class character of the Congress and depicting the treacherous role of the Indian bourgeoisie.

A third valuable point in the president's speech was his plea for an adequate system of philosophy to guide us in the national struggle. As he trenchantly declared "no movement for national freedom can be always based on emotion, hysterics and histrionic shows". This is a demand the importance of which we have consistently stressed in this paper, and we believe that the president of the political sufferers' conference would agree with us that an adequate basis can only be found in Marxism and the viewpoint of dialectical materialism.

On this basis alone is it possible to comprehend the decisive role which will be played by the masses in Indian politics. Dr Dutta does not fight shy of recognising the existence and character of the class struggle in India even though, as he says, this is "anathema to the social-unitarian nationalists". Though he makes too close

an identification of the masses and the proletariat or working class (the masses are not a single social class but include both working class and peasants) he is perfectly correct in saying that "the aim of the workers for Indian freedom should be to organise the masses". His exposition of the need for organising the masses on the basis of a socioeconomic program, and for the poor middle class to give up their petty-bourgeois mentality and identify themselves with the fate of the toilers, was forcibly and eloquently presented and we hope that it will bear fruit in widespread practical application. The only criticism that needs to be made of this portion of his speech is on the lack of an immediate program. His speech though far in advance of anything said by other political leaders, was still confined to generalities. His "minimum program" does not formulate any basis on which activity shall be conducted. It puts forward no demands or slogans which can rally the masses. He says only:

"The field and factory workers and the toiling masses in general should be organised in labour unions. A detailed plan of it can be matured later on."

This unfortunately says no more than the Congress which has always recorded a verbal declaration in favour of organising labour.

It is further proposed that the political sufferers "should be knit together into one unit" and an all-India association formed as the nucleus of a new movement. Dr Dutta would like the political sufferers to act as a new leaven in the national struggle. But for that he must state more clearly where he stands. It is no use going half way and then halting. Either no attempt at all should be made to put forward a uniform political outlook to bind together the political sufferers, or a definite viewpoint advocating a definite political program should be put forward. The president expounded his general viewpoint with admirable clarity. He asked that the work of building up the mass movement should be undertaken. To ask that is meaning-

less unless the actual slogans essential for a mass movement are also put forward and explained. The absence of any statement on the burning issues of the socioeconomic program itself was the most serious omission in an otherwise excellent speech.

One last point which deserves special commendation must be mentioned, and that is the emphasis laid on the necessity of bringing the mass movement in India into relation with the world proletarian movement against world imperialism, and especially on the need for cooperation with the class-conscious section of the British proletariat. As he remarks, this section of British workers is realising that "the fates of both the Indian and British masses are linked together, the iron chains that hang on the neck of both have been forged by the same capitalist class". Instead of assuming, as the orthodox Indian nationalist carelessly does, that the British labour movement is wholly a social-patriotic and imperialist one, he rightly recognises that the masses of the British proletariat are becoming more class-conscious, and that in proportion as that is taking place they are divesting themselves from the influence of the petty-bourgeois social-traitors who have placed themselves at the head. We hope that his message will be noted and taken to heart in Great Britain as well as in India, when he says:

"We are watching with interest the struggle that is going on inside the British labour movement and we say to them, realise that our cause is your cause, and your cause is ours. Keeping these facts in view we will have to work and cooperate with British labour."

Naturally, a speech as novel and outspoken as this met with none too approving a welcome from the ranks of the bourgeois-nationalists. It was, of course, dubbed a "communist" speech and ignored as far as possible. Questions were asked whether or not the political sufferers' conference was an anticongress body. Yet there is no doubt that the speech was much more representative of the real opin-

ions of the rank-and-file delegates to the national congress than all the talk of harmony between the classes which was preached so assiduously at the congress sessions.

A leading article of the Calcutta *Forward* claims to notice a "perceptible swing to the left" at the national congress, but it omits to notice at all the proceedings of the political sufferers' conference. The most notable sign that it finds of this swing to the left (apart from the "increasing volume of opinion against...dominion status") is the anxiety shown to "bring the classes to join hands with the 'masses' ". It declares that the leaders are "anxious to bridge the gulf that separates the masses from the classes" and further that they are "anxious to avoid a class struggle in this country". Obviously this is the reason that they are so desirous for a joining of hands. The cat is nicely let out of the bag. The truth could not be blurted out more plainly. The anxiety on behalf of the masses is only lest they should object to their exploitation at the hand of the privileged classes. The class struggle is to be liquidated by making khaddar "the habitual wear of all congressmen". This happy solution might be recommended to other countries where the conflict between capital and labour threatens to assume gigantic proportions. It will be at least as effective in these countries as in India. Other papers also refer to this new use of khaddar as an oil to allay the troubled waters of social unrest. The *Bombay Chronicle* conducts an interesting polemic against the *Forward* view of a swing to the left. In an article entitled "A Swing in the Air" it ridicules the idea that the congress proceedings are evidence of a swing to the left. It agrees rather with the view of the *Tribune* and the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* that in reality the Congress has climbed down from what it now calls the futility of the Kanpur program. It emphasises the absence of all references to civil disobedience and the rejection of the proposals of walkouts. As for khaddar fetish, it notes the outspoken statement of Goswami on this subject but, and this is the interesting point here, it agrees with the view

that khaddar has come to stay as a link between the classes and the masses.

The article in the *Bombay Chronicle* correctly points out that the left wing in the national movement was not to be seen in the leadership of the National Congress but in the representatives at the political sufferers' conference. This was the real left wing as opposed to the sham left wing of the swarajist rhetoricians. The resolutions passed by the conference show that the views put forward by the president were acceptable to the representatives. In particular it is noteworthy that the conference passed resolutions calling for the immediate organisation of field and factory workers and for the sending of greetings to the British proletariat with the request for their cooperation in the common cause of freedom from all kinds of exploitation. We hope that these resolutions will not be allowed to remain barren words as in the case of the previous congress resolutions but that the whole left wing of the national movement will see to it that they are translated into terms of concrete action.

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